WOMAN IN ITALY

WILLIAM BOULTING

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WOMAN IN ITALY

TUSCAN DRESS OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY. "THE RAPE OF HELEN"

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WOMAN IN ITALY

FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CHIVALROUS SERVICE OF LOVE TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE PROFESSIONAL ACTRESS

BY

WILLIAM BOULTING

AUTHOR OF "TASSO AND HIS TIMES," ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK

BRENTANO'S

1910

TO EDWARD HUTTON, ESQ.

My Dear Hutton,

Since the foundations of this little work were laid many a notable lady of the Italian Renaissance has become known to the reading public: the sisters D'Este, Elisabetta Gonzaga, and Caterina Sforza, for example, are now quite our intimate acquaintances. Therefore I have drawn my illustrative facts, as far as was possible, from many sources which have not yet found their way to our islands. The registers of Italian life, from the time of Dante downwards, are so extraordinarily voluminous, so many domestic incidents, trifling but illuminating, are recorded, that some of these stray footmarks of oblivious Time may have escaped the notice of the accomplished Biographer of Boccaccio, even; while the conclusions to which they compel me may not be without interest to him. So, my dear Hutton, I venture to offer this little study in social evolution as the tribute of a sincere friend.

WILLIAM BOULTING

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WOMAN IN ITALY

INTRODUCTION

THE fertile vigour of little Italian States from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century created a new world. Its momentum is still felt in literature, in art and in social life. It was then that woman began to emerge from the protective bondage which barbarism and social insecurity had rendered necessary. Now, all development has an economic basis, and the economic foundation for this exuberant vitality and novel freedom is to be found in expanding commerce, regulated by the co-partnership of trade-associations. The intellectual energy of Italians, fostered by growing wealth and civic pride, culminated in that fine blossoming of life which we speak of as the High Renaissance. But most writers on the period have taught, and it has come to be generally credited, that the Renaissance was a time of exceptional moral depravity. It is true that wily manœuvres then replaced to a great extent the brute force of an earlier date in the struggles for political mastership and personal safety; that the unveiling of a more than half-forgotten past, while it suggested new ideals of life, furnished an abundance of evil examples which men and women were not slow to follow, and that the degener-

ation of Catholic Faith into a formal cult at its central seat removed many old restraints and obligations.

Yet it is obvious that the liberation of personal character, in the female hardly less than in the male, gave freedom of action to the *whole* individual nature; and human nature is of very mixed quality. Some have said that the loss of civic independence was the ruin of Italian virtue. But have not those who entertain this theory lost sight of the bloody and remorseless struggles of families and factions, for political predominance or for life itself, which took place in the free communes and filled them with iniquity? The commune witnessed, almost daily, spectacles of bloodthirsty vengeance, sinister cruelty and malevolent and pitiless brutality. Why, the rule of the despot was only accepted by the commune because it promised some measure of the impartial execution of justice, some tincture of order! That anarchic licence which stood for liberty in the so-called Republics of Lombardy and Tuscany had been possessed by a limited class only, and that class was the oppressor of the *popolo basso.* It is true that Mediaeval Religion tended to degenerate into formal observance during the Renaissance, but its ancient ascetic tyranny over life, its mutilation of the soul of man, was thereby rendered nerveless. One must admit, however, that the loosening of bonds to clan, guild and little city carried its own evils with it; that the enfeeblement of traditional moral codes, unaccompanied, as this was, by the evolution of any new moral synthesis, proved in many ways a misfortune; for there was no just public opinion formed to pare off crooked growths of personality.

Nevertheless, the writer believes that the age was

very far from meriting the unqualified censure which it has received. It was a period of expansion and advance, and its very worst features were survivals from more barbarous times; we are impressed by its anomalies precisely because they stand out in strong contrast to the new culture; they are therefore dramatic and, by exciting our imagination, disturb our judgment. Students of the period have been misled, too, by the satires and criticisms which really indicate the awakening of a deeper moral sense; by the less commendable and very virulent attacks of foes and jealous rivals on each other, and by ingenuous self-revelations, unrestrained by social convention and, therefore, not yet toned down into hypocrisy. Too much stress has been laid on certain men of the Renaissance who lauded the worst vices and indecencies of classical times. These vices were a deep stain on the Middle Ages, and the commendation bestowed on them later was largely imitative—the offspring of uncritical enthusiasm for an older and more humane civilization and all that it contained. And, not so long ago, historians accepted as true many unfounded slanders which owed their inception to the jealous rivalry of courts or the malice of exiles or disappointed place-seekers. The acquisition of temporal sovereignty, too, with all its attendant evils, by unworthy successors of the Fisherman—men whose prince-like, self-indulgent and often scandalous lives, accorded but ill with their spiritual pretensions—as well as the almost complete acquiescence of Italians in the ecclesiastical authority of such men, has created an invincible prejudice in many minds; and this prejudice is reinforced, for many a pious person, by the spectacle of religion

converted from credulous fear into ceremonial cult. But this prejudice the author cannot share. There was no lack of men and women who led strenuous saintly lives during the Renaissance. When reading the records of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he remembers older records; and all well-instructed persons can recall certain cantos of the *Inferno* that are filled with facts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Cesare Borgia was less cruel than Eccelino da Romano; the warfare of the later condottieri showed little trace of the atrocity of the Middle Ages and was far less sanguinary and devastating than that of to-day; the Papacy was at least no worse than when, in the tenth century, infamous women, Theodora and Marozia, held the chair of St. Peter in their keeping. The vice of the period is indeed glaringly obscene: it was not veiled by hypocrisy, nor worse than the vice of the Mediaeval period.

History teaches us that in societies, as well as in individuals, intellectual development is in advance of ethical development, and mental ability may attain colossal proportions before the moral sense is greatly stirred. This was the case during the Renaissance, and, as a consequence, the unsocial side of that period was marked by consummate craft. In all great movements there are undercurrents and back-sets, but the reader will probably discover that throughout the period with which this book deals, there was a progressive softening of manners, an improvement in the position of women, and a growth of human sympathy. Even religion, wherever it had real power over the heart, took on a more forbearing character.

Perhaps the most significant and valuable results of

a great era of achievement (which commenced with the introduction of Provençal idealism into Italy and was only checked or diverted into other channels by foreign conquest, by the discovery of new trade-routes and of a new world, by Protestantism, and by the Council of Trent) were the enhanced value that woman found in her own life, the growth of her importance in social life, and her influence over social development. With the partial emancipation of personality came the partial emergence of Woman, and in the following study the author hopes he has furnished abundant evidence to show, first, how very substantial yet how wholly partial that emergence was, and secondly, though incidentally, that this very incomplete liberation of a sex was concurrent with a very real amelioration of the human lot, an increase of human kindliness, and a growing sense, not, indeed, of the obligations of traditional and conventional duty, but of the binding power of our common humanity on men and women alike.

PART I

WOMANHOOD IDEALIZED

CHAPTER I

THE CHIVALROUS SERVICE OF LOVE

THROUGHOUT the earlier periods of Roman history women were held in protective bondage. Yet the Roman matron was always highly honoured, and not only was a large measure of legal freedom granted to women in imperial days, but they enjoyed a degree of social liberty which, often, they shamelessly abused. And, as Tacitus tells us, the Teutons, to whom the Empire was to fall, regarded their women with a reverence that approached idolatry. German wives were wont to fight for independence at their husbands' side. Yet the rude laws of their race kept them under male tutelage. The dark and bloody times which accompanied the overthrow of Roman rule gave Teutonic laws a wider scope, and renewed the ancient servitude and complete dependence of woman.

Nay, worse: she was loaded with shame by the victorious Church. Notwithstanding the legends of women martyred for their steadfastness in the faith, notwithstanding the veneration with which the Mother of God was regarded from the times of St. Augustine

downwards, notwithstanding the large share that Bertha of Kent took in the conversion of England and Chlotilde in that of France, the fair forms of women had disturbed the austere contemplation of anchorites and tortured them with solicitations to forfeit their heavenly prize; therefore a debased asceticism filled a clergy under the obligation of celibacy with a passionate horror of womankind. Woman was regarded as the cleverest of all the snares the craft of the devil had devised; she was thought of as an unclean animal, in fellowship with Satan, one inherently and unconquerably wicked, and, as St. Chrysostom described her, nothing but "a necessary evil, a natural temptation, desired indeed, but bearing calamity with her, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination".[1] At a synod held at Macon towards the end of the sixth century it was even debated whether she possessed a soul. Eunuchs were substituted for her in the choir, and she was often herded with lepers and penitents in the narthex, at as great a distance from the altar as possible. [2]

The echoes of Roman and Teutonic traditions may still, in those tenebrous times, have reverberated in the valleys of Provence. Roman culture lingered longest in the South of France; that land enjoyed relative peace, and thither an extensive Mediterranean commerce brought opulence. The lords of the fertile soil, already rich, found their wealth still further augmented by levies on trade. They even

[1] On this subject see *A. Bartoli*, Storia della lett. ital. Firenze, 1880, iii. 110-11; also *Innocent III*, De Contemptu Mundi.

[2] *E. A. Westermarck*, Origin and Development of Moral Ideas, 1906, pp. 665, 666.

achieved no small degree of refinement, though they remained unlettered. Their ladies bedecked themselves with Eastern fabrics and sought to give comeliness to the home and polish to society. The dwellers in the castle made it a profitable resting-place for travelling companies of acrobats and jugglers and all that might break the dull monotony of their lives, and châtelaines, many of whom possessed rich fiefs of their own, ladies who had been given in marriage for the ratification of peace or the increase of power, listened with delight to songs of an ideal life of romance, so remote from the colourless sobriety of daily existence. The minstrels began to vie with each other, each adding some novel and fascinating note to an old romance or inventing some fresh, wondrous story.

Furriers and fishermen, poor clerics and the sons of lackeys, often discovered that they had the profitable gift of song; and among them were a few men of genius. Everywhere the minstrel was welcomed; a kind of brevet-rank was accorded him at the castle, and, before long, even men of birth did not disdain to pursue the joyous art. Raimond Vital gives us a vivid picture of noble knights and gentle dames listening with rapture to a minstrel no less richly garbed than they.

If the peasant broke the tedium of the castle and enchanted its occupants, he, in his turn, often fell under the spell of some fair young dame whose delicacy and refinement appeared all the more splendid to him by contrast with the ignorant coarseness that betokened the women of his own homely class. To him her haughtiness was a foil to her grace; Oriental

silks and pearls were an artless and natural adjunct of beauty. The lady would welcome him most warmly when he sang the perilous song of love. Often his own suppressed passion, quickly perceived by its object, awoke a reticent response. At all times, the châtelaine would be gracious enough to listen to the singing of her praises, and it was felicity to her to have them spread abroad. If real passion blazed, the lady, married to some grisly, jealous baron, must be addressed in cryptic mode, understood of her alone. The enamoured poet sought refuge in the nebulous ether of all that is mystical and transcendental, or concealed his passion with all the artifices of his craft. Hence arose a poesy of love in which the importance, even of that master passion, was exaggerated; the beloved one became transfigured into a divinity with celestial attributes and perfections. Sometimes, it is true, the minstrel dwells on sensuous delight: "I will never bestir me from lying at the feet of my lady until she admit me to her bower," sang Bernart de Ventadour;[1] and sometimes such ardour had tragic ending. Yet, such physical passion was not for courtesans, as with the Roman poets, but for courtly dames, and it is expressed with a rapture of submission that is a new note: the abasement of the lover would have seemed lily-livered, indecorous and wholly effeminate to the poets of antiquity.

The châtelaine eagerly accepted this novel homage; it was directed to her very self; it was not an abasement before woman in the abstract. But she was a married woman, and, even when she was willing to gratify her lover, she was usually too discreet to

[1] *Mahn*, Werke der Troubadours, i. 45.

stand the hazard of the dishonour and vengeance that would follow discovery. Yet, the wandering minstrel, singing the special characteristics of a chosen mistress, heralded the Renaissance; he is the fountain-head of the liberation of individual disposition from conventional fetters, the unconscious knight-errant of a sex.[1]

The new minstrelsy, then, sang strains of prostrate devotion because marriage with the object of passion was unattainable; she was always a married woman, under a contract which had been wholly regulated by the requirements of feudalism; one with whom adulterous relations were both difficult and dangerous. In that age the love of man and maid was only known by that lower class which still remained almost uninstructed in the meaning of the marriage-bond. A natural passion, aroused by high-born married ladies, was forced into strange, fantastic courses; it beat the air to achieve some supreme destiny; it winged its ardent flight away from the warm vulgarities of flesh, and sought shelter and satisfaction in the rarer and more subtle empyrean of the spirit. In hyperbolic verse the poets of Provence praised Beauty, the begetter of a love which takes up its abode in the innermost soul and causes the lover to fear and tremble while it spurs him to noble imaginations and deeds—deeds sometimes great and generous, sometimes acts of folly, but always passionate and unheedful of self. But there is never an epithalamium to be found. Marriage was held to be, not merely incompatible with such love, but, in its very nature, opposed to it; indeed the doctrine seemed almost too evident to admit of question. For, since true love must be spon-

[1] *V. A. Arullani,* Giorn. stor. della Liguria, cxiv. pp. 115 sqq.

taneous and above all carnal appetite, the body only pertained to marriage; the soul was free. Yet, the popularity of certain romances of Northern France,[1] such as the tale of Tristan and Iseult, and of others, both of French and Spanish origin, that told of youthful lovers seeking the sanction of marriage, indicates an unconscious revolt against the existing marriage-custom, for they emphasize the natural right of passion. But in Provence a precise, irrational and wholly conventional system of artificial sentiment, the fruit of marriage-restriction, prevailed. Mingling with the hardier fancies of Northern France this became the inspirer of song, the golden spur to all knightly endeavour, the begetter of all knightly conduct and courtesy; it transfigured woman and endowed her with a moral supremacy[2] which was above dispute, though it would have moved the ancient world to scorn. It gave rise to pedantic and meticulous problems which occupied the earnest attention of men and women who were, otherwise, of sober mind; problems that were discussed and decided at courts of love presided over by some elected queen. Passion was often feigned when it was not felt, and ridiculous ordeals were welcomed to give evidence of devotion; "Suffering and even death for her dear sake are joy and reward enough," sang Rogier.[3]

The raptures expended by the poet on some lady who usually allowed years to elapse before she granted even her hand to be kissed, and whom, often enough,

[1] See La femme et l'amour au xii. siècle, etc., par *Myrrha Borodine*, Paris, 1909.

[2] *C. C. Fauriel*, Histoire de la Poésie Provençale, 1846, i. 513.

[3] *Mahn*, loc. cit., *P. Rogier*, 118.

her lover had never even seen, neither interfered with his marrying and becoming the happy sire of a brood of his own lawful begetting nor interrupted any chance dalliance with some priestess of Paphos.

The new worship of ladies enhanced the reverence paid to the Mother of God. This cult, which had originated centuries before, in the Eastern Church, now accorded a scarcely credible importance to Our Lady among the celestial divinities. She became the purest, sweetest and noblest figure in the whole heavenly host. The Gentle Shepherd was no longer the Intercessor: it was the Mother Who pleaded. The Son had become the Avenger—the Judge Who is to come. In the thirteenth century every town, great or small, in Europe boasted exquisite chapels dedicated to Our Lady, where her mediation might be specially entreated. One of the earliest Italian sacred dramas depicts the wicked as imploring the Mother, full of pity, to give them some relief, some hope, however small. She pleads with her Son to revoke their doom; she adjures Him, by the nine months she bore Him in her womb, to relent. Surely her dutiful Son will perform what she entreats. He returns her a stern refusal.[1] "Every knight was the sworn servant of Our Lady; to her he looked for success in battle—strange as it may sound—for success in softer enterprises."[2] The position accorded to the Heavenly Queen and that bestowed on earthly ladies exercised a reciprocal influence of no small importance: the exaltation of either increased the reverence felt for the other.

[1] *A. d'Ancona*, Origini del teatro ital., 1891, i. 141-53.

[2] *H. H. Milman*, Hist. of Lat. Christianity, 1864, ix. 74.

The new service of Love passed from Provence into Italy, and, at first, was coldly received there. Rambaut, when he came to Genoa (A.D. 1190), courted a lady of that city, whose sense of propriety he greatly shocked; whereupon he wrote a *canzona* in Italian.[1] But certain noble houses, such as those of Este, Romano, Camino and Montferrat, welcomed the new poesy, and, gradually, the system made its way. A great number of Italians copied the poets of Provence, but a native strain, born of the sensuous fervour of Sicily, also made its influence felt. Though, by the thirteenth century, the Provençal system of love had become affected, formal, feeble and decadent, it was nevertheless accepted and employed by Dante and his circle. The idealization of woman had been transferred to Italy.

[1] *L. T. Belgrano*, Vita privata dei Genovesi, 389-93 and note.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINE OF CELESTIAL LOVE AND ITS COURTLY OBSERVANCE

THE vigorous industry of the little States of Italy in the later Middle Ages was naturally accompanied by many disputes, and, hence, the study of law was closely pursued at Bologna and elsewhere. From the study of ancient law men went on to the study of ancient letters; and, soon, they tried to recover all that had been lost in the cataclysms of the Dark Ages. Before long, schools, instituted for the study of jurisprudence, became the *Almæ Matres* of a new culture; for they nurtured men of independent spirit, who turned the Provençal mode of thought to a loftier direction. Already many Provençal poets, notably Rambaut, had perceived that passion may purify the heart and declare itself in a new language.[1] In the thirteenth century a little group of cultivated lawyers, men of high birth, ignorant of the marriage of affection, men who united romantic ideas with metaphysical learning, sought for the pledge of the Divine in female beauty and purity of soul. The story of the affection of St. Francis for St. Clare and how it supported his faith in God was recent; they had the examples of the Franciscan lyrics before them; but they built their

[1] *Mahn*, loc. cit., i. 67; *L. F. Mott*, The Courtly System of Love.

music on the forcible, if frankly carnal, poetry of the people. Guido Guinicelli (1230?-76?) gave passion and Guido Cavalcanti (1255?-1300) added theory and intellectual quality to what Dante called the "sweet, new style"[1]—a style that renewed the note of sincerity. The soul, seeking the beautiful spirit encased in the beautiful body, hit on celestial secrets; the loveliness of flesh was the mirror wherein the enraptured soul might see reflected the beatific beauty of Our Lady and communicate with the ineffable perfection of God. The poems appealed to a cultivated class, for the polish of such Courts as that Sicilian one of Frederick II had extended to the trading cities, wherein the local aristocracy were now compelled to dwell and matriculate in trade-associations. And, like their Provençal predecessors, these poets desired to be read by ladies; so they wrote in the vernacular. To the indirect influence of women, then, the great stream of Italian literature owes its source.

In the new style the cold conventionality of the later Provençal poets is replaced by warm and sincere feeling, expressed in flowing verse. There is such joy and suffering as only real living women could kindle; there is such reverence as only women who commanded respect in their own homes could inspire. That feminine quality of gentleness, which flows from the maternal instinct, stood out in strong relief amid the brutalities of the time. Cino da Pistoja's picture of "a sweet maiden, radiant with all the attributes of the angel, casting such welcome freshness around her that he who sees her, perforce, must sing," is a portrait —the portrait of some young Tuscan damsel. These

[1] Purg., xxiv. 57.

tremblings of the spirit are coincident with other indications of the great awakening to the glory of life which culminated three centuries later. And the fountain is, as yet, clear and pure. There had come to man that vision of the unattainable, that "passion that leaves the earth for the skies," that sense of mystery and transcendence, that ever-varying mood, which is the Romantic Spirit. Men of deeply religious sentiment endowed fair ladies with the wings of angels. "I have sung that of thee, which before remained unsaid of any one": it is thus that Dante addresses his dead mistress.[1] He was but nine when, on a festival-day, he met a still younger child, clad in scarlet. It is not uncommon for the mysterious stirrings of sex to be felt at an early age. But it is unique for the emotions of a young lad to be so profound and fixed that, with no friendly intimacy, either then or afterwards, so deep an impression was made as to affect a whole life and inaugurate a new era of thought and feeling. That chance meeting had incalculable issues. "At that moment the spirit of life, that hath its dwelling in the most secret chambers of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the smallest pulses of his body shook thereat." The child saw, not another child, but a star of the morning, a heavenly messenger. There was little or no social intercourse. Once, at 18, Dante received a greeting from Beatrice; she was married to one Simone de' Bardi, and she died when she was 24, to the inconsolable grief of the poet.[2] Her

[1] Vita Nuova, § 43.

[2] See Boccaccio's Commentary and that of Pietro, Dante's son, on Inferno, ii. 70.

memory associated itself, in Dante's mind, with all escape from flesh to spirit. An explosive spark, that might have debased and destroyed an ignobler soul, opened the regions of Infinity to Dante and revealed the contrast between those heavenly heights to which man may aspire and those depths of depravity to which he may descend. Like the Provençal poets he invested Beatrice with a mysterious disguise, so that she might not be identified. He refuses to answer questions concerning her and envelops her in an elusive effulgence. Yet, though the ray that shines from her eyes brings the Holy Spirit with it, Dante does not forsake the world: he marries and has children, keeps a firm grasp on life, penetrates the varieties of female character and paints them in a few bold strokes.[1] A mad passion, if you will, as mad as that of Pygmalion for his statue; none the less its creative force brought womanhood to life. The Purgatorio is dominated by gentle gracious ladies who sing psalms in bands and keep watch over the wanderer; they bathe him in purifying waters; they initiate him into sweet mysteries, and, finally, they lead him to Beatrice herself. Identified with "divine science," she bears evidence to heavenly truth; her beautiful eyes perceive all pure things at a single glance, and, through her, Dante gazes on that which is incommunicable; for he is enfolded in the presence of God Himself.

The experience of Dante, strange as it seems today, has recurred again and again in the history of the human soul. Plato held a doctrine not essentially

[1] Inferno, v. (Francesca); Purg., v. (Pia); Purg., xiii. (Sapia); Parad., iii. (Piccarda).

different, but the Phædrus and the Symposium were unread by Dante. That marked delight in beauty which characterized the Greek, though it lent itself to unspeakable baseness, was yet capable of begetting chivalrous friendship, and Plato taught that it should arouse the soul to perceive that True Beauty which is also The Good. It was taught, before Dante's day, both in Persia and along the shores of the Mediterranean that love should enfranchise the spirit; the Arab had reflected on love with that mystical and metaphysical occupancy peculiar to the Oriental mind. Abû Nuioâs sang of romantic love as early as the eighth century, and, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the religious order of the Rif â 'iuya turned carnal love-poetry to a religious use. Avempace, the Spanish Moor, taught a philosophy of love not different from that of Cavalcanti. The Arabic doctrine of *ittisâl*, that is of the possible union of the human soul with Supreme Intelligence, is reflected in Scholastic doctrine, and probably, in this way, became a factor in the production of the Vita Nuova and the Divina Commedia. Again, there was much intellectual intercourse, as well as commerce, between the Spanish Arabs and the Catalans and Provençals; also the knowledge of Arabic literature was vastly enlarged by the crusades.[1]

There was, perhaps, a more fervent quickening of the human spirit in the thirteenth century than in any other age. Then lived the true begetters of the Renaissance; then Dante and his mates engendered a "*vita nuova*". Italy created a new world fully two

[1] *G. Salvadori*, La poesia giovanile e le canzone d'amore di Cavalcanti, Roma, 1895.

centuries before Columbus found a new continent. The mediaeval world was the sanctuary of dismal credulity and supernatural dread. Now, the cheerful sun rose once again over Italy, warming her veins, and, before long, the Italian outstripped even the Arab in literature, in the arts and in the employment of life, so as to seem quite isolated and companionless in his illustrious distinction. In this awakening, insensibly, without agitation, a woman, if she were well-born, found herself surrounded by novel approval and in the possession of a large range for her activities.

In one direction, none the less, her destinies were determined by her parents and relatives; she must marry the husband their prudence prescribed. Sentiment was excluded from the marriage-bond. It had been very emphatically decided by the Countess of Champagne (A.D. 1174) and at many Courts of Love, that true love cannot exist between married people, for love is free and spontaneous. It was not, however, perceived that these decisions carried with them a protest against the kind of marriage-knot that was then a matter of course. For the structure of society still required a purely worldly contract, and this necessity both gave rise to these decisions and left the tie unquestioned. Hence, material fidelity was alone regarded as important. A woman might enjoy the advantage of a lover after the spirit and a husband after the flesh. And since, as we shall see, the essence of marriage was consent, when, later on, religious feeling concerning the sacramental character of marriage became enfeebled, adultery was regarded as a trivial matter, if it could be kept from being bruited abroad.

The next great servant of love after Dante was Petrarch, who only wrote trivial verses until "Cupid sped his shaft from the ambush of Laura's prayer-book" (A.D. 1327). For him, as for Dante, the love of a married lady might lead to the Supreme Good[1] and elevate his soul to the First Great Cause.[2] But the Laura of Petrarch never becomes an abstraction of the virtues. She is a woman ripe and real, with a "white bosom" and "dainty feet". The lady, but newly married, accepted his homage but found it necessary to check his ardour and administer reproof. His love was far more according to the flesh than that of Dante; his lady reveals no small measure of femineity; sometimes he regrets the days he has wasted on her and his submission to an objectionable yoke. His love, although it survived the death of Laura, did not restrain him from becoming the father of children by an unknown woman. His friendly intimacy with the married lady must have been of the slightest character, so that he was able to persuade himself that she was a saint, and, after her death, she appeared to him in a vision and told him that she only awaited him and the resumption of that beautiful body now lying in earth.[3] His real passion was for her beauty and grace; he glorified her womanhood; his glowing imagination gave him sympathy with her personal character, and, in spite of her sainthood, he revealed living woman to a world in love with symbols. Beatrice was an abstraction: Laura is alive.

Boccaccio, a son born out of wedlock, to whom his father gave a careful education, became enamoured of two ladies during a stay at Naples. But he fell

[1] Canzona x. [2] Canzona vi. [3] Sonetta xxxiv.

very desperately in love with a married lady, identified with the illegitimate daughter of King Robert of Naples, whom, like Petrarch, he first saw at church (A.D. 1341). He met her a few days afterwards, and they talked together on a dangerous topic: they discussed a French romance of love. She suggested that he should write a little book. So the *Filocolo* makes its appearance, redounding to her honour, and leads to an intrigue. Like the poets of Provence, and for the same reason, Boccaccio throws mystery over his love case. He forgets his "Fiammetta" in the arms of Luccia, a beautiful lady of Florence, and his forsaken love bemoans his desertion and reminds him of the first kiss. This love-affair was human enough, and it was not without an ennobling quality; for not only does Boccaccio make the shepherd Teogape sing of the transforming power of love, but he tells us how Fiammetta appeared to him after her death: "Whilst I gazed on my angel," he sings, "she stretched forth her hand as though it were seeking mine. I awoke. Alas! it was to wretchedness. Perchance, could I have grasped it, I had not found the low earth again."[1] Probably Milton had these lines in his mind when he wrote that most tender and pathetic of sonnets, the one addressed to the memory of his second wife.

Like the Provençal poets, Boccaccio sought the favour of Court-ladies. The Queen of Naples listened to his bright tales, and it is possible that they were written for her.[2] He dedicated his book on *Illustrious*

[1] Rime di Messer *G. Boccaccio*, Livorno, 1802, xix.

[2] *Attilio Hortis*, Le donne famose descritte da *G. Boccaccio*, 1877, p. 34.

Women to Madonna Andrea Acciaiuoli, a sister of the Grand Seneschal of Naples. Noble ladies preside over the company of the *Decameron*, as they do, later, over the circles of Bembo and Castiglione and the novelists. The manners of the Court he had dwelt at and the demoralizing effect of the plague account for the moral tone of his ladies and gentlemen; they live to enjoy the passing hour, for to-morrow is uncertain.[1] Boccaccio is keenly alive to the opposition between the marriage of convenience and natural passion: he makes nine of the ten tales of love-adventure, told on the fifth day, conclude with matrimony. But he manifests less spirituality, less passion, and less respect for women than Petrarch: he is at pains to inform us that lasciviousness is a weakness with women,[2] and that illustrious women deserve higher praise than illustrious men, since they belong to a sex of inferior frame, mind and worth. And, although he had been a courtier, he retained the prejudice of the burgher-class from which he sprang; the tale of the patience of Griselda embodies the burgher's ideal of feminine submission. Boccaccio accelerated the transition from Dante's mood to the *abandon* of Lorenzo de' Medici, who sings:—

> Lovely girls, disarm, I pray ye
> Freely yield your hearts to lovers;
> May's no month for war.

From the first appearance of romantic love in literature (and literature told back on life) we can distinguish two tendencies, one sensuous, the other spiritual. Girolamo Benivene, a Florentine, wrote a

[1] *Scipione Ammirato*, Storie fiorentine, l. x.

[2] *Boccaccio*, De claris mulieribus, Bernae, 1539 (Sabina Poppea).

poem (on which, later, Pico della Mirandola commented)[1] setting forth certain subtle distinctions in love. There is the celestial love of the soul, the human love of the mind, and the animal love of the body. The highest species is a purely intellectual desire for true beauty; the second and third species are for sensible beauty; if the ideal is associated with the corporeal it loses its perfection; yet it is rational, attributing beauty to the soul, and it may purge love from all bodily stain.[2] This doctrine gives a position to woman inferior to that supreme importance with which Dante endowed Beatrice; and Mirandola readily accepts feminine imperfection. Yet it could not fail to elevate both sexes. It appealed to the fancy rather than to the heart, but it prevailed, and often it ennobled sincere passion. For example, Galeazzo Marescotti de' Calvi, of Bologna, when he was a young soldier in the service of Francesco Sforza, loved Camilla Malvezzi, a married lady, and wrote her love-letters. After her death, he speaks of her great beautiful eyes that drew the heart out of him, and how he would fain follow her who has been as a firm pillar to his life.[3] Instances similar to this might be multiplied, and all of them show how entirely separate in men's minds the practical ends of marriage remained from those of spiritual devotion.

To love spiritually, became a necessary qualification for all who aspired to intellectual completeness; and, since Petrarch was the sweetest of lyrists, his

[1] *J. Picus Mirandula*, fol. Basileæ, De Amore Celeste.

[2] Compare *Petrarch*, canzona xlviii.

[3] *L. Frati*, Galeazzo Marescotti; Atti e mem. della R. deput. per le prov. di Romagna, 1903, p. 152 sqq.

manner was imitated, especially in the sixteenth century, by legions of enamoured gentlemen.

A sentiment that we may deem absurd was, none the less, a means whereby both men and women hoisted themselves above the gross, carnal life of their time: for the earlier period of the Renaissance, it had the same sustaining power as that sense of honour which was acquired at the close of the great age; though both sentiments assumed exaggerated and even grotesque forms.

Men deliberately battered themselves into a semblance of passion. Lorenzo de' Medici tells us, in his *Inamorata*, that when a certain young married lady of great beauty and mental cultivation died (she was the Simonetta, beloved by his brother Giuliano and painted by Botticelli), he desired to compose some verses in her honour, and, to make them more touching, he affected that he had loved and lost her. Then he passed the fair ladies of Florence in review, to see if there was one "whose virtue might inspire a constant love". Having found one to his mind, he tells us: "henceforward her sole beauty filled me that had dissipated myself on a thousand objects".[1] But Lorenzo's nature was too rich and many-sided to admit of his becoming the slave of a single idea; at one time he would rhyme gaily and loosely, at another in notes of exquisite sadness, as the mood took him. Lorenzo and rich young men less gifted than he also employed the pens of learned men to render their beloved ones immortal; Poliziano celebrated that fair Lucrezia Donati who secured Lorenzo's devotion; Ugolino Vermi wrote her a poem in Latin to plead his cause;

[1] *L. de' Medici*, Selve d' Amore, St. I.

while Lorenzo wrote to Clarice Orsini, his affianced bride, to tell her all about a tournament given in Lucrezia's honour, whereat he had carried off the prize.[1]

In the fifteenth century, the rapid growth of wealth in the Italian cities, the journeyings of their merchants all over the known world, and the improvement in mental discipline diverted the energy hitherto bestowed on religion to the affairs of human life. Devotion to God was, to a large extent, replaced by interest in Man. The ideal of self-abasement vanished; that of self-fulfilment took its place. And though, here and there, a lively belief in the value of a complete surrender of life to God persisted, it had lost its harsher characteristics. In the world of letters scholars searched eagerly for ancient manuscripts, unearthed much forgotten literature, created a passion for the classics and spread knowledge broadcast. Throughout the Dark Ages, even, there had been women of power and distinction, and now all men knew of the illustrious heroines of antiquity. The new-born enthusiasm for all things human was so strong that it never occurred to any educated person that the trifling accident of sex should bear with it any grave disability. Women were human beings; therefore nothing human could be a matter of indifference to them; they had the same passions as men; they did not lack that consuming desire for fame which to the scholar, as to the pagan Roman, was the grateful substitute for a somewhat doubtful immortality. Women-scholars appeared, and with knowledge of

[1] *E. Armstrong*, Lorenzo de' Medici and the fifteenth century, London, 1896.

Greek, the doctrines of Plato met with enthusiastic acceptance from both sexes, for both were already prepared to receive them. Though the female sex was excluded by Plato from his doctrine of "chivalrous love," his teaching was welcomed by those who pursued a cult so similar; and his teaching reinforced the influence of woman and secured her on her pedestal. The lady of the higher ranks emerges, in the fifteenth century, a wholly different being from what she was in the thirteenth, for, to a large extent, she has become the mistress of her own destinies. Marriage remains an important exception, but, in that regard, men are no better off than women.

Bembo taught the Platonic doctrine that love desires beauty, and, through earthly beauty, is led to that Eternal Beauty which is God; moreover, age is the most beautiful part of life, because fallacious earthly beauty, which is but a spur, is abandoned;[1] and Castiglione makes Bembo unbosom himself, before a courtly circle of men and women, of what is none other than the doctrine of the Symposium in words little, if at all, inferior to those of Plato in dignity and elevation.[2] Bembo and Giovanni della Casa, Apostolic Nuncio, celebrated the beauty and learning of Elisabetta Quirini; but the fashion needed little impetus: it was afoot, and by the close of the fifteenth century every man of polish and refinement had selected a lady and become her servant. These priests of love had not the heart of Petrarch to offer,—only threadbare affectation of his passion and vacant

[1] *P. Bembo*, Asolani.

[2] *B. Castiglione*, Book of the Courtier, tr. *Hoby*, ed. Henley, 1900, p. 270 sqq.

imitation of his style.[1] The allegiance of a lover became very fickle at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century; he by no means confined his adulation to the merits of a single dame; but all men of culture and especially the petrarchists were welcomed by the Courts and competed for by great ladies. Caterina Cornaro, ex-Queen of Cyprus, proclaimed daughter of the Venetian Republic, Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, and other ladies held *salons* where they received the homage of all the distinguished men of the time, accepted their panegyrics on spiritual love, womanhood in general and themselves in particular, and basked in the beams of a galaxy of literary suns. The earlier half of the sixteenth century ushered in shoals of petrarchists, many of them needy men who wrote flattering sonnets and amatory dialogues for gain. Insincere rhymsters these, nearly all of them, yet laying their facile, futile rubbish at the feet of the lady of the moment with an affectation of gravity that was only matched by the self-complacence of the recipient.

But the Court-poets gave an ideal grace to womanhood in a series of epic masterpieces. In the full Renaissance Boiardo and Ariosto sang the beauty and purity of their heroines. The ladies whom they met at Court were, for the most part, tasteful and refined: the poets idealized them. They chanted the warrior-maiden; nor were contemporary models wanting for those pleasing creations. And Tasso revealed the delightful waywardness, the seductive

[1] *A. Graf*, Attraverso il Cinquecento: Petrarchismo e antipetrarchismo, Torino, 1888.

CATERINA CORNARO, EX-QUEEN OF CYPRUS AND "DAUGHTER OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC"

TITIAN

Uffizi, Florence

charm, the incorrigible inconsequence of woman when she is most feminine. The Court-poets read their inventions aloud to great ladies, who accepted the homage of dedications to themselves. Poets of multiple gifts set their verses to music and chanted them like the classic bards or the troubadours of Provence.

Homage and opportunity had this admirable result: women applied themselves sedulously to the cultivation of their minds; they competed with each other for admiration, and even the pursuers of a calling as shameful as it is ancient, achieved the culture, assumed the importance, and copied the example of the Greek "companions". These demanded homage, they received respect. Taking Plato and Petrarch as models, they discoursed on immaterial things with their clients; they vied with and often worsted great ladies, honourably wedded, in that struggle for admiration which both orders so ardently desired; they also achieved odd, fantastic sovereignty. Sperone Speroni barbs a satiric arrow when he recalls to memory one who had perceived a quality of the divine in harlotry. It is strangely pathetic to come across a treatise on *The Infinity of Love* by Tullia d'Aragona, a notorious courtesan: she opposes the celestial to the terrestrial Venus and maintains that true love surmounts the flesh.

Not infrequently the culture of those times was occupied in covering corruption with grace, because natural affection was maimed and thwarted by social requirement, and passion found no congenial habitation in the domestic ingle. Men felt there was a problem to be solved: that is shown by the speculations of Doni, who, in the sixteenth century, imagined a city

of communism and free love where "quarrels shall be unknown, kinship shall not be deformed, women shall not be slain, husbands shall remain unaccused". There, no one will be able to recognise his own children, who shall be adopted and brought up by the community; the death of near relatives will cause no grief; there will be neither robbery, wills, nor litigation.

Courts had never been quite unknown in Italy, and, when the various communes fell under the rule of despots or merchant-princes, Courts became more numerous and more important. They give the high light to the social picture. Elisabetta, Duchess of Urbino, was almost the realization of the courtly ideal of womanhood. "Her very correct conduct," wrote Castiglione, "is conjoined with marvellous freedom, and she seasons subtle and acute conversation with pleasantry, yet, withal, she possesses grace and grave dignity; temperance and dignity mark every action, word and movement of the duchess, whether she indulges in smiles, laughter or conceits, and convince all who see, from the very first, that they are before a great lady." It was considered that a noble woman should be marked by *virtù* no less than a noble man, that is to say by will, intellect, and force of character; according to Castiglione, she must be so educated as to be the equal of her husband, and, though it is not needful for her to be specifically an authority on any subject, she must be able to form a judgment on all matters of taste and inquiry; her refinement should be apparent in dress, bearing, and conversation. She should make up for the natural weakness of her powers by superior acuteness and clever practicality, and, in addition to these qualities,

she should retain all womanly charm as well as interest in her duties as a housewife and mother.

Castiglione is in advance of his time when he makes "the lord Julian" say that "in case any woman of the palace be not maryed, mynding to love, I wyll have her to love one whom she maye marye, neither will I think it an offense if she showe him some token of love".[1] Even as late as 1540 marriage was held to be compatible with goodwill only; "for love is a reciprocity of soul and has a different end and obeys different laws from marriage. Hence one should not take the loved one to wife."[2] It shows the power of the Catholic reaction that the author of this opinion retracted his statement eight years later. The natural effect of flesh on spirit made some deem it impossible for a man to really love a woman who gave herself to another, her husband excepted: so Bandello tells us.

So remote was this romantic sentiment, now become an affectation, from the ordinary relations of life that, in the Full Renaissance, we find Frangipane Cornelio theorizing on love, paying Platonic reverence to a married lady, endeavouring to calm her grief at her husband's death; laughing, meanwhile, at an unfortunate girl who had been seduced by a priest, and carrying on intrigues with a governess and a cook. The novelists represent the more natural passages of love in brutal, sensuous mode; their realism is wholly sundered from the courtly graces of their sentimental passages: it was no weakness of the age to submit to self-analysis or probe the infirmities of the soul. So

[1] *Castiglione*, loc. cit., p. 270.

[2] *Piccolomini*, Instituzione.

the service of love degenerated into a fashionable hypocrisy, full of forced conceits and execrable imitations. There were shoals of servants of the lady who enjoyed a lively reputation among their contemporaries; but slow Time is just and has awarded them the meed due to their merit; their renown was buried with them; their works lie sepultured on obscure shelves, visited only by some stray curious scholar.

Ladies began, as early as the fifteenth century, to return the compliments of men in kind. Leon Battista Alberti, one of those sovereign minds of universal scope that Italy produced so freely during the Renaissance, wrote a work wherein a lady who calls herself Hecatomphila discourses at the wedding of Ludovico Bentivogli and Annabella, the daughter of the Marquis of Montferrat. She recalls her own loves ("which until this instant were never more than two"), and the first, when she was a young maiden, brought sorrow indeed, but was no counterfeit passion and never can be removed from her memory. A woman, she is made to say, should choose for her love one that is of middle age, not over-handsome, lest, being desired of diverse, she lose him, nor too dignified, for such are commonly proud, nor unrefined, for then he will boast of favours, nor a dissembler. Let the loved one be wise, modest and virtuous. Such an one was her first husband. Maidens will light on bale in a multitude of lovers, for these will spy on each other and be secret foes, so that there is neither safe assurance nor privilege, and their lady gets no rest from them. Therefore one lover is to be selected to whom secrets may be disclosed. "I have seen homely maids better beloved for civil demeanour and

modesty than fair faces for pride and boldness. If virtue, discretion, modesty, gentleness and courtly behaviour first induced you to love, then return them." Here we find, not only the woman prepared to return the homage of the man, but positively an instance of the coincidence of this homage with wifely duty. By the sixteenth century we find the courtly service of love become fashionable among women; they exchange Platonic love sonnets with men; Tommasina Spinola falls into the deepest love for Louis XII of France;[1] Tarquinia Molza, a beautiful widow, learned in Plato and skilled in astronomy, entreats Tasso to bestow his heart on her, but is delicately informed by the poet that the organ, devoted to another, has burned to a mere cinder.[2]

In the sixteenth century Academies arose. They were, in large measure, courts of love, where pedantic and absurd questions were gravely debated by scholars and dilettanti of both sexes. Vanity strutted there, and the devotees of love, in suitable Court-dress, exchanged Petrarchistic wailings before admiring princesses and their maids of honour at the palace. In fact, such affectations were a welcome reaction and means of escape from the actual grossness of every-day life; men of impure life rejoiced in the fresher air of a lofty flight, or in adding the zest of imagination to intrigue.

By the close of the century Italian Platonism was in decline. A writer of the period returns to a common-sense view of women when he says that they

[1] *Jean d'Auton*, Chronique de Louis XII.

[2] *A. Solerti*, La vita di Tasso, Torino, 1895.

may attain all the virtues no less than men.[1] Still, in Venice, a bride no sooner reached her new home than admirers began to whisper in her ear, and when she went to church she would find them awaiting her to do her little services; they wore away her dullness in the winter season; most young people were engaged in this occupation, and many ladies were not content with a single admirer, but, in order to appear more attractive and noted, desired as many as they could get, and, in fact, they had so many favourites that there was strife all round.[2] Here is the dawn of the *cicisbeatura*, with its trio of the "accepted," the "aspiring" and the "suffering" lover. The "gilded youth" of Venice constructed a code which condemned, as disgraceful, the concealment of love from its chosen object for a longer period than six months, and held despicable the lover who boasted of any favour, while the man who should hang about the house of his beloved to insinuate that his devotion was rewarded was a creature deserving death at the stake. They also endorsed a new strange sentiment: no married man should court.[3]

Were it not for the obligations of family life and the subtle attractions of sex, in all probability there would be little social intercourse between men and women; each sex would prefer its own society. Complete comprehensive sympathy between the sexes is rare. Again, a human being, placed in subjection, even if the object be protection, is naturally inclined to smouldering, if unconscious, resentment, and incurs

[1] *Equicola d'Alveto*, Di natura d'Amore, Venezia, 1587.

[2] Ragionamente di sei nobile fanciulle, 1583, 12.

[3] *P. G. Molmenti*, Storia di Venezia nella Vita Privata, Torino, 1880, p. 301.

some degree of contempt, however it may be veiled. Creatures in tutelage are prone to dissimulation, and, therefore, in all ages women have been the subjects of paltry jibe. Out of one hundred proverbs concerning them in the Bolognese dialect there are only three or four that do not say injurious things, and the same is true of the proverbs of other provinces. "Woman is paradise for the body, purgatory for the soul, hell for the purse," may be taken as an example.[1] The Christian ascetic was aroused by natural temptation to a brutal hatred of the sex, and this became a traditional Christian sentiment, expressed with characteristic bluntness in the songs of the Middle Ages. The arrangement of wedlock on a basis of pelf and power did not improve matters: "every one will concede," says Boccaccio, "that he has not a wife to his mind, but one that fortune has bestowed".[2] Consequently we find sneer, satire and foul-mouthed abuse of woman[3] as well as declarations of devoted worship, and often both proceed from the same lips.[4] A reaction against the extravagancies of the chivalrous service of love was concurrent with its practice. At first, too, the education of women met with some opposition. In the fourteenth century we are told that "a girl should be taught to sew and not to read, unless one wishes to make a nun of her".[5] When

[1] *Ungarelli*, I proverbi bolognese sulla donna, Bologna, 1890.

[2] *Boccaccio*, Vita di Dante.

[3] *Simone di Ser Dino*, Forestiani Senese, Scelta di cur. lett. disp. num. 168.

[4] *Petrarca*, Dial. xix.; De importuna uxore; De remediis utriusque fortunae; Ep. xiv. *Boccaccio*, Filicopo, Corbaccio.

[5] *Paolo da Certaldo*, Breve Consiglio, Firenze, 1877.

women became a force to be reckoned with in social intercourse and in intellectual undertakings, in spite of the manifold varieties of female character that became apparent, the whole sex was treated as a single entity, both by men and its members, and was fiercely assailed and strenuously defended. Women rushed into the fray, retaliating on their foes, not without an overwhelming host of male allies. Men exposed the defects of men and set forth the praises of women; seas of ink were shed, a few lively epigrams let off, and a vast number of absurdities perpetrated.[1] It would occupy many pages to give even the names of the warriors. The relative importance and distinctive qualities of the sexes, quaintly set forth and whimsically supported, occupied the Academies.

The feudal lady, in addition to domestic duty, often had to direct and defend a domain which she held in her own right, and the military duties of a feudal lord devolved on his wife during his absence from home. But no such responsibility fell on the woman of the burgher class. She was called on to repay the protection given her by father, husband and brother by completely submitting herself to their will. Her duty was the ancient one—to look after the house and spin. If she fulfilled these obligations, a certain kind of respect was not withheld; she received most praise when she utterly effaced herself and silently obeyed, like patient Griselda. The ideal burgher's wife kept her house clean and peaceful, she sought her husband's advice and accepted his will as her law; she strove to be spoken of as modest and

[1] See *Burckhardt*, Renaissance, tr. Middlemore, 1898, p. 395.

kept her looks fixed on the ground;[1] she was to be a "mirror of virtue," modest in manner, simple in attire, a pattern of self-repression, helpful in sickness, kindly to the poor, but not over-generous and so render her husband less wealthy; religious, but not inconveniently so, exhibiting in fact just that degree of piety that would serve as a pledge for the fulfilment of her duty as wife and mother; she should also be faithful to a dead husband's memory.[2] Women accepted this ideal for themselves and stamped it on their daughters; it was the condition of their well-being. As we shall see, it was modified by several influences: by the example of a landed gentry compelled to dwell in cities and enrol themselves in trade-associations, by the usefulness to a travelling merchant of a wife who could cast accounts and look after his affairs during long and repeated absence, and by the aspirations of certain very wealthy families in trade to political rule and at least brevet-equality with regnant houses. But even among the barons the pride of the male in protecting and commanding weaker creatures enabled them to discover charm in sweet submission and softness, and the tender, enduring obedience of a Griselda to themselves, combined with an inflexible support of their authority over the outer world, was their notion of what constituted a noble lady.

[1] *M. Palmieri*, Vita civile; *A. Pandolfini*, Tratto del governo della famiglia; Forcianæ Questiones, Neap., 1536; letter of *V. Bisticci*, 10 Dec., 1480, given by *A. Moschetti*, Misc. nuz. Rossi-Teiss, 1897, pp. 224-5.

[2] *V. Bisticci*, Not. di ill. donne del sec. xv. Arch. stor. it., S. I., iv.

PART II

THE REAL WOMAN AT HOME AND IN LIFE

CHAPTER I

THE MAIDEN

A YOUNG girl's life was cramped and squeezed into a narrow mould. She had to fulfil the requirements of the extremely exacting Bashaw that lurks in the male bosom. Her father's desires were aided by the unremitting efforts and example of a repressed and acquiescent mother. She was trained to submission, and was carefully secluded from all knowledge and contact that might smudge her innocence; for, if innate purity is a quality incapable of manufacture, at least the greenhorn is a passable substitute for the virgin soul. Throughout the period of which we treat, unmarried daughters remained under severe restrictive discipline. The despotic power of the Roman father was modified, it is true, by the Lombardic occupation of Italy; the maiden remained, indeed, under immediate paternal authority, but the Teutonic principle of association threw her under a general supervision of the entire circle of her relatives, and her destiny was usually settled at a family council.

But, in the period immediately before Dante, there

may have been at Siena, and possibly elsewhere, a measure of freedom and gladness permitted to the young daughters of *gentiluomini*. Not only do we read of a society of noble youths reduced to beggary in two short years by their lavish expenditure on guests and ladies, but a poet speaks of youths and maidens snowballing each other in January; in April their wont was to pass pleasant hours together on the banks of some stream; in May there was jousting, and wreaths were dropped from balconies and casements; then comes the astounding statement that tender damsels and youths saluted each other and kissed on cheek and mouth, and "every day was glad with joyful love".[1] It is a pretty picture, probably painted with a free and imaginative brush: these employments of May, from what we know from other sources, suggest the licensed description of mere poetic fancy. The same poet speaks of the profusion of rich furniture and costly rugs of his time, which we know, from exact inventories that have been preserved, were very scanty. The kiss was probably exchanged by young pairs, plighted by their relatives, the operation not ordinarily proving revolting to youth of opposite sexes; some courtly service of love may have been thus rewarded by youthful wedded ladies; an occasional stolen kiss may have inflamed the poet's fancy. Yet, exceptional freedom *may* have been enjoyed by Sienese ladies; we shall find that the manners of the Genoese hardly kept to the straightest standard of severity; the main occupation of the landed class during times of peace is invariably amusement, and the nobility may have enjoyed less restrictive notions

[1] *Folgore da Gimignano.*

before they were absorbed by the trading communities. We certainly find the daughters of the wealthy still fêted, serenaded and snowballed at Florence in the times of the Medici.

The young girl was trained in austerity, and the impulses of her youth were mortified. To save the burgher's purse his daughters were taught not to be "fanciful and proud"; hence young people, who were dressed like their parents, are usually exempted from the operation of sumptuary law. Barberino (1264-1348) directs that a girl of rank, approaching the marriageable age (at that time about 12) should not go to church too often, so as to avoid being seen over-much, and even if her father be knight, judge or physician it is well for her to learn how to cook; she must not loll or prop herself on her arms at table, and she should speak less at meals than at other times—that is to say, very little indeed; she is to take but very little wine and that well watered; she must keep within sight, feel embarrassed before male eyes, keep her own eyes on the ground, and, on account of those naughty French romances that are so popular, to keep her mind pure, she should not learn to read.[1] In the fifteenth century a Florentine bookseller would have no girl over 7 speak to a male, and she should always be kept busy about the house; she is to be brought up to the glory of God, kept from novels and even from Petrarch, "who, though chaste, is unsuited to the innocent mind," but put to the lives of the saints and similar improving works.[2] Even as late as the sixteenth century we find conservative writers urging

[1] Del reggimento e dei costumi delle donne.

[2] *A. von Reumont*, Kleine Schriften, p. 25.

that reading and writing are all that a woman requires in the way of literary equipment,[1] and one author finds it necessary to cite illustrious examples in order to prove that education does not render a woman shameless.[2]

Solomon's advice to parents was not neglected. A Tuscan proverb taught that "woman, good or bad, needs the stick," and Giraldi, writing in the sixteenth century, recommends that parents should "dust the dress" of their daughters. Up to 15 years of age the birch accompanied the reproof, and above that age the stick was used until complete submission was obtained.[3] Yet, with the advance of culture, we find Giovanni Rucellai pleading for joyousness in youth; children must be taught to reason, rewarded with praise, and not beaten, "which makes the mind slavish".[4]

We learn from the novelists that maidens were busily employed at needlework when they were not occupied in household duty; they were given religious books if they could read, and were taken to church; they were given dolls, played battledore,[5] danced and sang together and had pet birds. Alas! they were also fond of the window, where Satan was very eagerly watching for them. Poor girls had enough to do to help their mother in the house and look after the

[1] *B. Trotto*, Dialoghi del Matrimonio, 1583, p. 193.

[2] *Ludovico Dolce*, Dialogo della Instituzione delle donne, Venezia, 1559.

[3] *Antonio Pulci; S. Minpurgo*, Ammaestramente.

[4] *G. Marcotti*, Nozze Nardi-Arnaldi, Firenze, 1881, p. 95 *sqq*.

[5] Witness the fresco of *Michelino da Bedozzo* in the Palazzo Borromeo, Milan.

younger children; the daughters of the wealthy were put more to fancy-work than to books; but an improvement in their education took place when it was discovered how useful an accountant a wife could be during the absence of her merchant-spouse.[1] The first communion was received at the age of 7. Dominican and above all Franciscan friars attended to religious education. An infant school was kept by a Florentine dame as early as 1304.[2] There were schools in many cities in the fourteenth century, and G. Villani tells us that in Florence, in his time, 8,000 to 10,000 boys and girls knew how to read. This widespread education made the Renaissance possible. The burghers, a class called upon to exercise self-restraint and to make provision for contingencies, inclined strongly towards an austere, religious education for their children, and at the end of the fifteenth century, at the request of Savonarola, Sunday Schools were started at Florence.[3] In remote parts, such as Romagna, simple manners were deemed more important than literary education, and we find Elisa Petrascini, the mother of Attendolo Sforza and twenty other children, bringing them up to "set no store by fine clothes or delicate eating or soft beds".[4]

In dress, from babyhood the girl was a miniature edition of her mother; but from the age of 7 until she became marriageable, the sumptuary regu-

[1] *M. Staglieno*, Le donne nell' antica società genovese, 1879, pp. 9, 12.

[2] *E. Rodocanachi*, La femme italienne de la Renaissance, 1907, p. 29 and note 4.

[3] *P. Burlamacchi*, Vita di Savonarola, Lucca, 1764, p. 105.

[4] *Zazzara*, Della nobilità d'Italia (famiglia Sforza).

lations usually allowed her to wear trinkets forbidden to young children and her elders, probably because there was so little danger of her father being lavish over a girl's finery. Boys, as capable of strengthening that basal unit of Italian life—the family of blood relations—were much more highly valued by both parents than girls, who were regarded as a source of expense. Moreover boys could be made useful in business. Yet many girls were much beloved, and proved themselves of great value in the home. Alessandra Macinghi wished one of her sons to wed a poor girl, the eldest of twelve children, because she took the place of her mother, "an inefficient sort of person and always in the family-way," and, though Isabella d' Este rarely mentions her daughters and is full of her son, Lorenzo de' Medici speaks of his daughter as the comfort of her mother, the apple of her eye, and "as to myself, I say nothing, for you know how I love my children".[1]

Great attention was paid to dancing and deportment. There were no rules as to dancing, so it became a test of taste, activity and bodily control. Even in Barberino's time the girl who did not know how to dance was regarded as an idiot; she was instructed to lift the robe a little, so as to exhibit the feet, and to raise the mantle, so as to show it off. At Siena girls took two lessons a day of the dancing-master to the sound of the harp and lute.[2] Other people were, of course, present at these and other lessons, for the girls' protection, and so we find the education of Lucrezia Gonzaga entrusted, without hesita-

[1] *Von Reumont*, Lorenzo de' Medici, Leipzig, 1874, ii. 286.

[2] *Casanova*, La donna senese, p. 14.

Brogi.

A YOUNG FLORENTINE GIRL

DETAIL FROM THE "BIRTH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST," BY DOMENICO GHIRLANDAJO (1458-94)

In Sta Maria Novella, Florence

tion, to Bandello, a man notorious for his amours. At Venice the very first thing taught was to curtsy gracefully.[1] The dancing-master was all the more a person of importance that he arranged the dances at weddings and festivals. Guglielmo, a Jew of Pesaro, taught his pupils to be "dignified in bearing, gracious and agreeable in movement, light on the feet, with eyes neither wandering nor fixed on a particular gentleman"; the pupil was directed to leave her partner at the end of a dance with a smile, take her seat and maintain an air of reserve.[2] Attention was to be paid to the way in which the arm was held, so that it should be displayed to advantage. Education in music began with learning the lute; the harp and zithern followed. Whilst the daughter of Federigo of Mantua was instructed in the humanities by the learned Colombino of Verona, she was receiving lessons in lute-playing, singing and dancing; and so seriously was this last-named accomplishment taken that we find Philip of Spain, like another David, solemnly dancing with great dignitaries of the Church at the Council of Trent.

The wealthier burghers, especially the merchants of Venice and Florence, sent their daughters to convents at about 7 years of age, and there they remained until they were marriageable, learning embroidery[3] and cookery and imbibing the rudiments of letters and piety, or at least a great sense of the importance of formal religious observances. Many

[1] *Vecellio*, Habiti, fol. 126, V.

[2] *Rodocanachi*, loc. cit., 197.

[3] *P. Molmenti*, La storia di Venezia nella vita privata, 1904, ii. 534.

elected, or were persuaded, to take the veil. On the other hand, many girls of good family were put under masters, in the fifteenth century, when they were found sufficiently prepared to profit by their instruction. Some convents devoted their main energies to education and charged high fees, payable in advance.

When enthusiasm for the classics was at its height, in the middle of the fifteenth century, Vittorino da Feltre, a scholar of great repute, opened his "casa zoiosa" to the daughters as well as to the sons of nobles and to poor boys of promise. The sexes were taught together, his aim being to develop the power of self-control and the ability to form wise judgments rather than merely to transmit learning. He held that the nature of true education is the creation of a love for simplicity of life and a lofty way of thinking; so does the learner receive an endowment that enables him to put forth all the might of the soul. Life at this school was austere, but the body was developed by games, in which Vittorino took an active share.[1] During the remainder of the century and later we find the same tutors employed for girls as for boys and the same education given to high-born children of both sexes. Caterina Sforza and the daughters of the Grand Duke Cosimo were educated with their brothers; Columbino of Verona, the famous commentator on Dante, gave lessons to the two little daughters of Federigo, Marquis of Mantua; Battista Guarini and Jacopo Gallino taught Isabella d' Este. Ladies continued to receive lessons even after they were wives and mothers. In the sixteenth century

[1] *A. Luzio* e *R. Renier*, Giorn. stor., xvi. 122-42; see also *Rosmini*, Vita e disciplina di Guarini, 1805-6.

we find governesses employed in great families, as well as male-scholars of distinction.[1] Yet among the strange contrasts and contradictions that confront each other in this age, while young ladies of rank were receiving a noble and unrestricted training, we find fathers advised to behave coldly to daughters so as to keep them from admiring masculine qualities,[2] and Giraldi would not have boys and girls to play together.

At no time were domestic duties neglected. The most learned princesses did not renounce horsewomanship and the lighter accomplishments, and they were most notable housewives. The object of intellectual training was that they might act as coadjutors to their husbands; they grew up in an atmosphere of intellectual activity, refinement and taste. We find the daughters of the great house of Este reading the works of Latin authors, Provençal poets, French and Spanish romancers, and historians; they sit with their mother embroidering in some chamber decorated by great masters, or by some cool, splashing fountain under the shadow of the lemon-trees, while the great masters of the age read their latest productions to them. "Latin," says Bembo, "will add to a young lady's charm."

The insecurity of the streets forced on the evolution of refinement in the home. Even girls of lowly station could not be allowed to go out unaccompanied by their mother or some relative. Up to the fifteenth century, and later in Siena and Perugia and elsewhere, ancient feuds would flare up suddenly, but it was only when the French and Spanish invasions broke over

[1] *A. Luzio* e *R. Renier*, Mantova e Urbino.

[2] *S. Morpurgo*, Ammaestramente, Firenze, 1892, p. 41.

the land that young girls found that churches, even, were no refuge from injury and gave no security for the preservation of their *onestà*.[1] Yet, at the best of times, the street was no place for a young girl. There was always the danger of a subtle sally from amorous eyes, or some familiarity, such as a kiss or a hand plunged into the bosom from some undesirable admirer or needy youth who wished by this means to force on marriage. For, whatever might be done in private, a kiss given in public was the irrevocable sign of wedlock in the days before the Council of Trent, since, as we shall see, marriage was effected by compliance with a loose civil form. These assaults were especially common at Genoa, and at Venice girls always went to church hidden by long white veils and accompanied by armed retainers. In 1482 a young lady of Venice, accompanied by her mother, was suddenly seized, put in a *barca* and carried off.[2] Early in the sixteenth century Pietro Lando, afterwards doge, but then podestà at Padua, ordered his own natural son to be decapitated for the offence of kissing a girl, with whom he was in love, in the public street.[3] But it is noteworthy that in the sixteenth century when centralized government gave greater force to authority, the narrowing effect of seclusion on the young girl and its moral inefficiency appear to have been recognized, and the freedom allowed in England and the Low Countries was admired[4] but not followed.

[1] *J. Buonaparte*, Ragguaglio storico, Colonia, 1756.

[2] *Galliccioli*, Delle mem. ven. ant. profane ed eccles., 1795.

[3] *M. Sanuto*, I diarii, iii. c. 314-5.

[4] *Bandello*, g. ii. nov. 44; g. iv. nov. 27.

CHAPTER II

BETROTHAL

AMONG the Teutonic tribes, who became Italian landowners, betrothal was a contract only less inviolable than marriage, and lasted a considerable period before wedlock took place. When a portion of the warrior-caste was compelled to take up trade and reside within city walls, it was allied by blood with feudal owners who still dwelt in the country; feuds were maintained and were not very rigorously repressed by the communes on account of the incalculable value for defence of men trained to arms. Each family strove for place and power, and girls were betrothed to friends for protection or to foes for the ratification of peace. And when, by the end of the fourteenth century, the enmity between nobles and populace came to an end, a new class of wealthy merchants arose, who, with their adherents, married their children for wealth or the manipulation of political power: avarice and the exigencies of caste replaced the dictation of the blood-feud in betrothal. From the Lombards, then, was derived the importance of betrothal, and betrothal maintained its significance under changed conditions. The Roman girl had been subject to paternal despotism; the destiny of the Italian girl rested, at first, not merely with her father but with her family, and not merely with her

family but with the political party to which her family adhered; later the little community into which she had been born had a word to say on its own behalf; later still, the usurper who ruled it. At first the power of the family was supreme; the parents on both sides took their places in a council of relatives, and, unless they were very important people indeed, the custom was maintained in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[1] Betrothal usually took place between those inhabiting the same quarter; at first, because allied families resided near each other, under the shelter of their protecting towers; later, the bride was given to some neighbour following her father's trade—someone, therefore, who was thoroughly known. Among the higher classes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the three points of greatest importance in betrothal were lineage, wealth and political party; later on, wealth and position, especially political position, were most considered.[2] By the end of the fourteenth century the enmity between nobles of Teutonic descent and the people, though used politically, did not interfere with betrothals between the two classes. Political exigencies or greed brought about very early betrothal and marriage; babes in the cradle were often affianced, and, often, they did not meet before the signing of the marriage contract.[3] A prince of Urbino saw his wife, for the first time, after they had been married by proxy.[4] In 1477, Anna Sforza, aged three, was affianced to Alfonso, the new-born

[1] *Bandello*, g. i. nov. 5.

[2] *P. Villari*, La famiglia e lo stato poli. econ., 1868.

[3] *Rinuccini*, Ricordi Storici, Fir., 1840, p. 259.

[4] *Luzio* e *Renier*, Mantova e Urbino, p. 187.

son of Ercole d' Este, the bridegroom being carried in the arms of the ducal chamberlain to the Milanese ambassador. Filippo Maria Visconti betrothed his illegitimate daughter, Bianca, to the condottiere, Francesco Sforza, when she was only 8, and Lodovico Sforza, among other honours and rewards, gave his illegitimate daughter to Galeazzo Sanseverino when she still lacked five years of the nubile age.

In the family council the old power of the father still preponderated, as it did in law. A Genoese blacksmith in 1488 promises his daughter to another man following the same trade, with a dowry of 400 lire, payable in four years; meanwhile he engages to take his prospective son-in-law into his shop and support him; but should there be any indecorous conduct between the affianced couple, both shall be sent away and the father set free from every obligation.[1] The destiny of a daughter could be determined by a father in his will, and a widow and the dead man's other trustees could delegate their authority. We find a Genoese undertaking, by legal document, to give, to another citizen, his daughter for his wife, on her attaining the marriageable age of 12, and, in pledge of fulfilment, the prospective son-in-law receives a house. In 1216 two Genoese declare that they have received authority from a widow to marry her daughter to whatever Genoese citizen may appear most desirable, with a dowry of 100 bezants besides trousseau.[2]

If the future couple were present at their betrothal it was ratified by the gift of a ring and a kiss at Genoa,

[1] *M. Staglieno*, Le donne nell' antica società Genovese, 1879, p. 18.

[2] *L. T. Belgrano*, Della vita privata dei Genovesi, pp. 411-12.

Naples, and many other places, the kiss being specially important, as the recipient was supposed to be half-deflowered thereby.[1] In most places engagements were usually private affairs unless a considerable interval must elapse before their fulfilment, or unless the contracting parties were of high birth. In 1478 we find a marriage arranged and publicly declared by a communal government. Among princes the treaty of betrothal was effected with much display, as when Ercole d' Este, finding that the Pope coveted his dominion, and being unable to defy an enemy likely to prove as implacable as he was powerful, betrothed his heir to Lucrezia Borgia, the Pope's illegitimate daughter, a woman of weak will and stained reputation: the lady offered up thanksgiving with a retinue of 300 knights and four bishops, and, according to custom, gave her rich robe to her fool.

Betrothal was regarded as a very solemn contract, only invalid when effected at an early age without parental consent. If the parents arranged a marriage between little children, to take effect on their reaching nubile age, the obligation was held to be valid and inviolable.[2] Notaries drew up the contract; the fee of one in 1380 is recorded: it was four lire;[3] they attended at the house of the bride's father, and witnesses were also present. At Florence in the fourteenth century we find a notary employed the day before the marriage: it was his duty to hand in, at the Palazzo Vecchio, a statement of the names and residences of the contracting parties and of the number

[1] Consuetudines Neapolitanae, 1588, p. 255.

[2] *G. Marcotti*, Donne e monache, 1884, p. 71.

[3] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., p. 19.

of guests to be invited to the wedding. In Venice, during the sixteenth century, in patrician circles, the bridegroom often enough never saw his bride before the day appointed for signing the contract. He and his friends were received on the steps of the palace by his future father-in-law and conducted inside; in the midst of gay conversation and music, the doors would be thrown open and the bride-elect appear, with her hair down; she was always dressed in white or peacock-blue. She was conducted by the dancing-master, who had been busily preparing her for the wedding-ball, to her parents and close relatives. She knelt before them for a blessing, but spoke not one word; then, entering a gondola and taking her seat outside the *felze*, accompanied by a multitude of ladies in gondolas, the gondoliers being set off with scarlet hose and rich fringe, she went to visit her relations. The matrimonial treaty was taken by the notary to the palace and published, and there the bridegroom received the congratulations of his brother patricians.[1]

An affianced bride was a person of temporary importance, and the city-fathers of Genoa showed some sympathy with the betrothed young girl's feeling of her own consequence when, in 1440, they allowed her to wear clothes and jewels forbidden, under sumptuary law, to other women.

Betrothal often lasted some years, and in that case the swain was wont, in Tuscan cities at least, to serenade his future wife with music of fife and trumpet. We learn, from records left of Alessandra Macinghi and Lucrezia Tornabuoni, what great pains a careful mother would be at in looking out for suitable mates

[1] *F. Sansovino*, Venezia descritta, 1604, p. 270.

for her children: The future mother-in-law showed a sharp eye for health, appearance, character and worldly gear.

It was a general custom, in the fifteenth century, for the brother of the bride-elect to bring her future husband to see her. A pert lass would not lose the opportunity of confounding a shy lover and carrying it with a high hand, while she could still do so. If he were a short man, she might stand back to back with other girls of the house to show how much taller she was than he; then if he were asked if she pleased him, she would say, "But you don't please me".[1] Sometimes the suitor would arrive unexpectedly, and then there would be a fine fuss to get the young lady ready, and she would have to be pushed forward for a salute.[2] Camillo Gozzadini has recorded how, in 1569, he travelled from Ferrara to Bologna to see the girl who had been chosen as his bride. Her brother pointed her out to him through the nun's grating at church; and, eleven days afterwards, accompanied by his sister, he visited the young lady's mother. He lays special stress on a male relative of the prospective bride offering them sweetmeats, for sugar was an expensive luxury and its use was always noted. This gentleman conducted them back to their lodging; and the wedding took place twenty-seven days afterwards.

A betrothal was a sacred obligation in the Middle Ages; the bitter feud between the Buondelmonti and the Uberti arose from its breach. The assassination of the offender was a sacred duty, devolving on the

[1] *S. Bernardino*, Prediche, iii. 105.

[2] *Julia Cartwright*, Isabella d' Este, i. 310.

injured family:[1] the statutes of Gadara required divorce prior to re-betrothal, and the transgressor was to be beaten and banished. But, later on, we find arrangements of marriage annulled without any such dire consequences. A peculiarly disgraceful instance occurs in the records of the Sforza family. In 1450 a marriage was agreed upon between Galeazzo, the eldest son of Francesco Sforza, usurping ruler of Milan, and the eldest daughter of the Marquis of Mantua. A year after it was discovered that the prospective bride was suffering from spinal curvature, and both houses agreed that her sister, Dorotea, should replace her in the projected alliance. But, when Sforza found himself quite firmly seated on his throne, he cast about for a better match for his son. In 1458, we find Galeazzo visiting his bride-elect at Mantua, and writing home about the pleasant interviews he has had with the little girl. In 1462, he was sent to Mantua on another visit. But Dorotea was now drawing near to the nubile age. Francesco made use of a priest to request that Madonna Dorotea should be thoroughly examined by a doctor, to make sure that she had no affection similar to that of her sister. Sforza received explicit assurance that his fears were groundless; so he wrote to the marquis saying that he was getting everything ready for the marriage, but he wished two doctors to examine the young lady and was quite sure such a request would not be refused. Much correspondence followed, turning on the degree of bodily exposure required. The duke demanded that the girl should be completely stripped; the marquis refused to have the maidenly modesty

[1] *D'Imola*, Comment. on Inferno, xxviii. 103.

of his daughter unnecessarily insulted; while Galeazzo, worked on by a letter from his mother, dated 28 November, 1463, declared his perfect neutrality in the matter. It was evident to the densest person that Sforza was beating about for an excuse to break off the match, and the marquis wrote, with some dignity, to say that his daughter had, with due reserve, shown her back to the family, and he did not think it necessary or consonant with a maiden's delicacy of feeling to do what was requested, nor was he compelled to comply. And so the betrothal was annulled.[1] The loosening of the rigid tie of betrothal is even less noteworthy in the marquis's reply than the new note of personal modesty it strikes. The novels of Sacchetti reveal how far from squeamish folk were in the fourteenth century: in the fifteenth we find a maiden distressed at the idea of having to appear naked before the judgment seat of God.[2]

If a girl disliked the project of being given to an unknown, or, perchance, a hated man, there was no escape for her save by taking the veil; convents required a smaller dowry than husbands, and her father might be induced to consent. Yet even there she was not always safe—in the Middle Ages, at least. Corso Donati, "a cavalier of great spirit and fame, gentle in race and manners," tore his sister Piccarda, a young and beautiful girl, from her convent and married her to one of the Della Tosa, and these same

[1] *L. Beltrami*, L'annulamento del contratto di matrimonio fra G. M. Sforza e Dorotea Gonzaga, Arch. stor. lomb., 1889, pp. 126-32; *A. Dina*, Qualche notizie su D. Gonzaga, loc. cit., 1887, pp. 562-7.

[2] *Castiglione*, Courtier, ed. cit., 212-13.

LUCREZIA BUTI, THE NUN WHOM FRA LIPPO LIPPI ABDUCTED FROM THE CONVENT OF S. MARGHERITA AT PRATO

PAINTED BY HIM AS OUR LADY

In the Pitti Gallery at Florence

Della Tosa were guilty of the same offence for a similar end.[1] In the sixteenth century the abduction of nuns was not uncommon, but the ravisher was always a lover. Yet, in the fifteenth century, Fra Filippo Lippi carried off Lucrezia Buti from the convent of Santa Margherita at Prato.

Three ancient stanzas[2] that seem to come straight from the heart of a young girl tell us, in plaintive simple numbers, of a despotic father, a husband about to be thrust upon her, tortured hours, and her resolve to accept the only way of escape, by dedicating herself to God. Very, very rarely do we find a girl resisting her matrimonial fate. Once, indeed, in an official document of the early part of the fifteenth century, we read: "I find the parties stiff-necked, especially the girl, who, yesterday morning before the people, cast herself on her knees to me praying me to do any injury I might choose to her property or person, but that man's wife she will not become". The Bishop of Siena was obliged to write to the Sienese Captain of the people, asking him to use his persuasive powers and put a stop to the marriage, or there would be a public scandal.[3] Once affianced, whatever a girl's repugnance might be, marriage was almost unavoidable, as we have seen; in the sixteenth century, however, we find some indications of a feeling that the girl's wish should

[1] *Dino Compagni*, Chronicon Florentinum; Comment d'anon fior, iii. 51.

[2] *D'Ancona e Comparelli*, Compiuta Donzella, Le antiche rime volgari, 1875-88.

[3] *L. Zdekauer*, Lettere volgare del rinascimento, Boll. Sen., iv. 242-3.

not be ignored. Margherita Gonzaga, married at 16 to the elderly, twice widowed Ercole II of Ferrara, wrote to her father, 5 July, 1579, "Having heard that a marriage is being arranged between La Polisena and Gian Francesco Mainoldo, I am anxious to write four words to your highness, and I earnestly implore you not to allow her to be married against her will. Your highness will recollect very well that when I was at Mantua and was asked if I believed she would be content, I replied that the Gonzaga knew how to endure what might be insupportable to others."[1] The letter reveals the duchess's own experience of matrimonial felicity!

The lower the position in the social scale and the farther away we get from cities, the nearer do we approach free choice in betrothal. We find a certain amount of courting, even. The habit of the young men to line the nave of the church after Mass and look out for a bride, a custom still practised in the Abruzzi and other parts of Italy, is of very ancient origin.[2] The numerous festivals were opportunities for love-making, too. In Venice eligible bachelors of the artisan class would perfume themselves and put on fine clothes and swagger about with a dagger at the belt to vanquish the fair.[3] The peasant girl would give a sign if she welcomed her suitor, the form of indication differing in different parts; here she would light a fire; there she would present him

[1] *P. Ferrato*, Alcune lettere di principesse di casa Gonzaga, Imola, 1879, p. 18.

[2] *A. de' Nino*, Usi e costumi abruzzesi, 1881, ii. 1.

[3] *Tassini*, Feste, spectacoli, divertimenti e piaceri degli antichi veneziani, 1890, 52.

with nuts ; in one place, she would eat a chestnut he had hung up ; in another, drink out of the same glass with him. Then courting would begin, but not without the parents' consent, and presents would be exchanged.

The one important thing discussed before betrothal was the amount of the dower ; this was haggled over with the same ruse and determination as one finds to-day in an Italian shop ; proposals were made and conveniently forgotten when it came to the point. Sometimes a father would behave generously to a beloved daughter, sometimes he would marry her to a country bumpkin or a bastard to avoid paying much,[1] or make the girl a nun, though, even then, he would have to make a settlement, for there was no taking the veil without one. The destinies of a girl were dependent on the length of her father's purse and the strength of his affection for her ; if he were an exile or had failed in business, her dower could be taken, consent being obtained, from her mother's dower, or, in the last resort, she depended on the generosity of her relatives. At the close of the fifteenth century, many confraternities were established for the dowering of poor girls ; for the penniless maiden had not the smallest prospect of matrimony.

The amount of the dower increased by leaps and bounds, quite disproportionately to the increase of wealth. Even in Dante's time the birth of a daughter struck the father's heart with dismay, for he thought of the charges of the wedding-day and the excessive

[1] *F. Perrens*, Histoire de Florence jusqu'à la domination des Médicis, 1877-83, iii. 337 ; *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 71.

dower.[1] In Bologna, during the thirteenth century, dowers ranged from twenty to fifty lire, and the husband would give his bride presents of the value of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the dower he received; in the fourteenth century the dower reached 400-600 lire.[2] In Florence we find an even greater advance.[3] Usurping princes paid enormous sums to marry their children into ancient and legitimate reigning houses; in 1368 we find Galeazzo Visconti of Milan arranging a marriage between his daughter, Violante, and Lionel, Duke of Clarence, a son of the King of England, at the cost of five cities and 300,000 florins. Princes also strengthened themselves by alliances bought at a heavy price; Taddea d' Este brought Francesco Novello 18,000 gold ducats; Aleta, her sister, married to a prince of the Empire in 1382, took him a dower of 20,000 ducats, and Francesco III of Carrara had 25,000 ducats with Alda Gonzaga of Mantua.[4] In the fifteenth century we find St. Bernardino complaining of the heavy tax the dower is to fathers, and he says that, if a man have several daughters, it is a very hard task to marry one of them. In 1458 we find one of the Piccolomini praying the Sienese Government to remit a requisition, since he has just had the heavy expense of marrying one of his daughters, and must provide the dower for another.[5] In 1477 the marriage was arranged of Giovanni Rucellai, a lad of 9, to a child of 5; the dower

[1] Paradiso, xv. 103-5.

[2] *Mazzoni-Toselli*, Racconti Storici, ii. 300, 382.

[3] Boll. della, Soc. Dantesca ital., N.S., ix. (1902), 181-4.

[4] *G. Gennari*, Degli usi di Padovani, Venez., 1800, p. 33.

[5] Nozze Adami-Forteguerra, Siena, 1901.

was fixed at 4000 gold florins.[1] At Venice, in 1420, the dower of a girl of noble family was limited by statute to 600 ducats, though a plebeian girl marrying a patrician might bring him 2000 ducats; but in 1560, a dower of 6000 ducats was allowed. But sumptuary laws were always ineffective; exceptions had to be made with great frequency, and we come across dowers of ten times the lawful amount. In the patriarchate of Aquileia, the dower of a noble's daughter might reach 4000 lire; a farmer would, perhaps, be promised a couple of oxen, a couple of heifers and two gowns with his wife; a serf would expect his bride to bring a cow and her calf, a mark, a gown, a petticoat, a sheepskin, a chest used as a bench, a bed and a bolster or their equivalent.[2] Many causes contributed to the rapid increase in the value of the dower. Plebeians were ready to sacrifice wealth in order to marry their children into patrician houses; the increase of family power by useful alliances had to be paid for, and the expenses of the matrimonial state, which forced men to reflect before committing themselves to it, caused an advance in offers to overcome their hesitation; again the travelling habits of traders

[1] *G. Marcotti*, Nozze Nardi-Arnaldi, Fir., 1881, p. 15. The author, after consulting with specialists, has not attempted to give the equivalent of ancient moneys in modern coinage. He is advised that even an approximate valuation is likely to be far from correct. For every little Italian State had a different coinage, and the relative values of their currencies varied from time to time in purchasing power, being affected by local famine or plenty and other causes. Therefore the money-changer had to be a man of special knowledge and high ability, and hence he held a high social position.

[2] *G. Marcotti*, Donne e monache, p. 79.

postponed all question of marriage until an age when the inclination to it is less strong, while the luxury of dames and the heavy provision required for female children implied a bribe to enter the yoke. Thus did increase of dower compel further increase—a vicious circle against which St. Bernardino and others protested in strong terms.

The provident citizens of Florence started, in 1424, an insurance-office to provide for dower, which was copied by many Italian cities. For every 104 florins paid in the name of a child, 1000 florins became due in fifteen years' time; or the money might remain at high interest. If the child died meanwhile, half the sum otherwise claimable was paid to the father. Under the rule of the Medici, who muddled up private with public finance at the close of the fifteenth century, the rate was reduced, and this still further strengthened the prevalent dislike of matrimony.

The dower was not always paid down; it was, in every way, a fertile cause of quarrel and litigation. At the death of the wife, or on separation, the husband had to restore the dower, but he was allowed to use, on giving proper security, the whole or a part of it in business, and, sometimes, if he required more capital, he applied for it to be augmented, and, if left a widower, he would, perhaps, beg for the retention of a part, or even the whole, of the amount.[1] If he dissipated a dower he could be summoned for restitution, and sometimes the defaulting husband or his relatives had to surrender a triple sum. Sometimes the capital had to be sacrificed for pressing needs; we find a poor peasant-woman applying for permission to dis-

[1] *Perrens*, loc. cit., 338.

pose of a portion of her dower, she and her husband deposing on oath that they have not enough to support their children.[1] On the death of the husband the dower was returned to the wife, under trust; it descended to her children. We find one Oderigo di Credi claiming his dead wife's dower for his son. But a certain Niccolò di Lollo, who had been factor to the dead woman's father, and, later, administered his property, had entered a law-suit and obtained possession of it all. Oderigo armed himself with documents, confronted Niccolò and set forth his rights. But Niccolò, "being an entirely corrupt person, with little generosity or love and still less prudence, began to abuse me," says Oderigo, "and he tried to get his way by frightening me, as he used to do with Nofri. But, seeing his evilness and hard nature, and obtaining from him nothing but threats, I went to all his associates and relatives, male and female, that I knew, and got the same sort of treatment from these unreasonable people; they telling me to go and pursue my right where I thought I had it. Straightway I commenced my plea."[2] Instances of litigation arising out of questions of dower are of frequent occurrence in the legal documents that have come down to us.

The dower was usually conveyed to the husband's house with the bride, and he gave a receipt for it, on the production of which, after his death, the widow had the first claim among his creditors. With well-to-do people a casket of jewels and personal ornaments accompanied the dower. Among the vast number of receipts, etc., that have been preserved, we find

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 77.

[2] Ricordanze di *O. di Credi*, Arch. stor. it., 4, i. 55 sqq.

that this was the custom with quite humble folk in the sixteenth century: thus in 1505 the daughter of a cutler brought her husband, who was a barber, trinkets with her modest dower of 200 lire.[1]

Very rarely indeed was a dower dispensed with. We meet with one case in the novelists, certainly the record of a fact. Anselmo de' Salimbeni loved Angelica de' Montanini. Her only protector, her brother Carlo, having wounded another citizen of Siena in a brawl, and being unable to pay a fine of 100 florins imposed on him, lay in prison. There was no prospect of his release, but Anselmo paid the money, and Carlo and Angelica, in order not to be ungrateful, and to satisfy the honour of everybody concerned, agreed that she should offer herself to Anselmo as his leman. But the lover refused her petition, sought a notary, and, in spite of the strong advice of the man of law, married his penniless sweetheart.

[1] *M. Staglieno*, Le donne nell' antica soc. genov., 1879, p. 17.

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE

THE matrimonial usages of Italy were derived from two sources: both Romans and Lombards bequeathed elements of their laws to their Italian descendants, and herein we find the explanation of much that is fundamental amid the strange variety and confusion of the legal systems of different little Italian States. Here also lies the explanation of the prevalence of concubinage, the small stigma attaching to bastardy, the practice of legitimation, and the light manner in which connexions less stable than marriage were regarded. But the most striking fact is that among both Romans and Teutons the woman was placed in tutelage of the male; yet the object of this was not to degrade but to protect her and her own property and her children's, in ungracious and rugged times.

Before her marriage, the Roman girl was under the absolute power of the head of her family; by marriage she passed under the control of her husband; but the essence of wedlock lay in the mutually declared consent of both man and woman, and this was expressed by the entry of the bride into her husband's house.[1] And it was because consent was the essential feature that, in mediaeval times, betrothal became

[1] *T. C. Sanders*, Institutes of Justinian, 1888, xxxviii.-ix.

almost as inviolable as marriage. In ancient Rome there were three forms of wedlock: *confarreatio*, which was a religious ceremony that rendered the contract practically indissoluble; *coemptio*, where the bride was bought of the parents and repurchased her own rights by a nominal payment, and *usus*, a specially plebeian practice, constituted by the pair dwelling together for a year with the intention of forming a marriage; a purpose ordinarily indicated by the bride's reception into her husband's house or by a formal declaration of mutual consent in the presence of witnesses. *Usus* was the form usually adopted, and it became the basis of mediaeval marriage; legally, the wife still belonged to the family of her father and retained rights over her own property. The Justinian Code limited the power of the husband in dealing with the dower and increased that of the wife, and only when a settlement was in question, or previous issue of the union had to be legitimated, was marriage in church required: in that case a bishop and three clergymen must be present. Civil marriage began to fall into decay in the thirteenth century.[1] To indicate her supremacy at home, whatever the form of marriage, the woman said, on passing over her husband's threshold, "*Ubi tu Gaius et ego Gaia*": "Where you are master, I am mistress".[2]

But, if the woman chose to sleep three consecutive nights away from her mate, she was a concubine, not a wife, and did not pass into a husband's power.[3] In

[1] *E. Casanova*, Boll. senese, ann., viii. p. 14.

[2] *C. F. Gabba*, Della condizione giuridica delle donne, Torino, 1880, p. 531.

[3] *Sanders*, loc. cit.

later times, permanent connexions were not usually attended by formal marriage; while, in cases of formal marriage, a dexterous manipulation of the laws gave women considerable rights over their property.

Either party, among the Romans, could divorce the other. Legitimation of children was possible by the subsequent marriage of their parents, by imperial rescript, or by payment to the curia. Divorce was not prohibited among the Lombards, but it was punished by a heavy fine. We shall find that the Roman practice of legitimating natural children persisted, as did that of divorce, though the latter became unusual.

The Lombard laws expressly declare that a woman shall have no power to deal with property without the consent of the male in whose power she is; and further, that a woman must always be under the power of her father or, in the event of his decease, under that of the men of her family.[1] The Lombard father received a price for his daughter, who passed to the control of her bridegroom. On the morning after the consummation of marriage the husband gave his bride a present (*morgengabio*). The former practice was abandoned by Italians; the latter was retained. A Lombard girl did not enjoy the same rights of succession as a boy, for her own protection[2] and in order that the family should retain the power which wealth gives.

In the earlier part of our period, it would appear that Lombard law co-existed with Roman: we find couples choosing which law they shall live under.

[1] *C. Troya*, Storia d'Italia nel Medio-Evo, Napoli, 1839, IV, ii. leg. 178-204.

[2] *T. Hodgkin*, Italy and Her Invaders, 1895, vi. 198.

The confusion, due not only to this but to the different customs that grew up, and to the different laws that were imposed on different little States, gave great importance to the jurisconsult. The Roman law became modified by the Lombard law, for the latter, being feudal, held among the nobles of Teutonic descent; and, since the communes, when they had set themselves free, compelled the land-owning class to reside within the city-walls, in order both to break their power and employ their prowess, certain feudal laws and usages took root among the citizens. The natural desire of the *gentiluomini* to maintain family consequence demanded this. But the right of the father and relatives to dispose of the daughter's hand, though an unquestioned usage, is not to be found in the statutes of any mediaeval commune; yet it is set forth in the Neapolitan constitution of Frederick II.[1]

The form of marriage in Friuli, right up to the decrees of the Council of Trent, consisted in a meeting of bridegroom and bride in any public place. A witness, usually a priest, chosen simply because he could read and attest the validity of the tie in writing, asked first the bride and then the bridegroom if they consented; hands were clasped, a kiss given and the wedding party gave up the rest of the day to the ancient practice of hilarious and copious drinking of wine from the same cup as the wedding pair.[2] Elsewhere, a priest, a magistrate of the State, a notary or some worthy person, who was not a relation, was employed as witness. It would appear that if the bride were a maid she had to be asked several times

[1] *Gabba*, loc. cit., 532.

[2] *G. Marcotti*, Donne e monache, 1884.

before she blushingly answered *si*, but for a widow a single question was enough. We find that a certain man of the Val di Stura, near Genoa, had given a promise of marriage to a woman who had been a slave and by whom he had a family. He declared the slave to be his wife in his own house before a notary, a druggist and two neighbours, acting as witnesses, and he was pronounced to be fully married according to the manners and customs of his State and of the Holy Roman Church.[1] The old Roman marriage by *usus* was acknowledged by the canonists, and to its retention we probably owe the possibility of the marriage of affection. The presence of a single witness was enough; but documents were also employed in the Middle Ages to avoid dispute.[2] In Florence, a statute required marriage in church, because that was the most public place, but at Siena it became an increasing habit to give the required consent in private houses, and a notary was called in because life was uncertain, the witnesses, if few in number, might die, and a great gathering of witnessing guests was not only inconvenient and expensive but forbidden by law. Zdekauer could find no mention of ecclesiastical marriage in the early records of Siena. In Genoa the Roman custom of regarding the passage of a bride to her husband's house as evidence of marriage obtained, but a notary drew up a document if, for any reason, this were delayed.[3] Even in the sixteenth century a

[1] *M. Staglieno*, Le donne nell' antica società genovese, 1879, p. 23.

[2] *F. Brandeleone*, Di un instrumento matrimoniale del 1216, Bollet. senese, vi. 267.

[3] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., 25.

promise and exchange of rings constituted a marriage :[1] but the woman made wife after this fashion was often abandoned, though such a marriage was usually upheld as valid, unless the contracting parties, being under 20 years of age, had not received their parents' consent. How little the sanction of a religious ceremony was required, or even the presence of a priest thought necessary, can be shown by many instances which also throw interesting side-lights on manners. In October, 1443, a broom-seller stopped before a widow's house in the country to the north of Venice and called out, "Madonna, can you find me a lass?" "Are you mad, scoundrel," replied the widow, "do you take me for a bawd?" "Nay, you misunderstand me. I want a wife." "Very well, then, I think I can find one. Come back to-morrow." Next day the hawker came again, and found a pretty girl awaiting him, accompanied by a certain Domenico Moxe, who asked the couple if they wished to be united according to the demands of God and Holy Church. Both gave an affirmative answer, whereupon there was a feast and, says the document, *consumaverunt matrimonium.* In 1453 a waiter at an inn gave evidence that he was asked by one Giovanni da Crema and a certain Chiara to be witness to their wedding. Giovanni, turning to the girl, said, "I take thee as my wife," and the girl replied, "And I take thee as my husband of my own free will". Then Giovanni put a ring on her finger, they passed the night together, and were regarded by everybody as a properly wedded pair. In 1456 a certain Beatrice, returning from Treviso, met an old flame of hers, named Falcon. Falcon asked

[1] *Bandello*, g. ii. nov. 41 ; g. iii. nov. 60; g. iv. nov. 6.

CIVIL MARRIAGE AT SIENA IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY. THE BRIDE IS A FOUNDLING

DOMENICO DI BARTOLO DI GHERZO (⁜ 1449)

Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, Siena

her whether she were really going to play him false and give the hand that had been his to another. She answered: "I believed you were making a fool of me"; whereupon Falcon: "I promised you and I repeat my promise". Then both went into a house where there was one who would serve as witness. "You know that you are mine," quoth Falcon, whereto Beatrice replied: "Yes, truly". Then taking her hand, Falcon said: "I will take no other wife than thee"; and she: "I will take no other husband than thee," and so were they married.[1] A lady of Porcia asserted that she had been privately married in the presence of two witnesses; this, however, was denied by the man; both of the alleged witnesses were dead, so both parties were put separately to the torture, without the slightest result, for both stuck firmly to their separate tales.[2] At Genoa, the bride sometimes remained in her father's house for several days, and, in that case, the couple retired and shut themselves up for a quarter of an hour, the fact being recorded by a notary to render the marriage incapable of question.[3] The importance attributed to this custom is shown by an incident which happened in 1510. A girl not quite 13 years of age was removed by her trustees (who had obtained the consent of the Genoese senators) from the custody of her mother, the reason being that that lady wished to marry the girl to a lad of 18, who was the son of her second husband, and this was deemed an unsuitable match. The mother and another lady kidnapped the girl, carried her to the stepfather's, shut her up in a

[1] *Gallicciolli*, loc. cit., ii. 1769, 1770, 1771.
[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 72, 73. [3] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., 28.

chamber with the youth for company, and got a notary to record the fact.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent published the decision *De Sacramenti Matrimonii*, which insisted on ecclesiastical marriage and the prior publication of banns. The Council had several objects in view. It wished to protect women against the coercion of relatives and those set in authority; to prevent that repudiation of the wife which was so frequent; to protest, moreover, against the brevet-rank of wifehood accorded to the concubine and against the indifference to illegitimacy that resulted from loose forms of wedlock, and to steal a march on Protestant reform and exalt the power of the Church and its clergy. The decree fell in with a growing sentiment; for we frequently come across such cases as the following. A man appeared before the *podestà* accompanied by a woman with whom he had lived for eighteen years. A file of their boys holding on to his right hand and several girls to his left hand came behind; he demanded to be legally married, and gave the woman a golden ring.[1] Yet, even after the sittings of the Council, we find a man of conservative temper denouncing new-fangled notions about matrimony. In 1580, while a priest was preaching in Friuli concerning the necessity of obeying the decree, up stood Simone Siccardi, declaring that he for one refused to do so; no priest had been required to make his daughter an honest married woman.[2]

It is somewhat astounding to find the *jus primae noctis* asserted by a lord of the soil as late as the sixteenth century. In the thirteenth century, indeed,

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 235. [2] *Ibid.*, loc. cit., 70.

the Canavesi revolted on this ground, and in 1524 an infuriated peasantry burned Pietro Buzzi alive for renewing the ancient privilege.[1]

But the vestiges of habits far more ancient than mediaeval or classical usages are to be found. One still remains in parts of Italy ; it is the wailing of the bride, and is a relic of marriage by capture. In our period, at Florence and in many parts of Italy we find the *serraglio*, another vestige of the same mode of mating. In Florence, it was mixed up with traces of marriage by purchase. When the bride left her father's house for the church, a band of youths stopped the way with a rope of flowers or a long ribbon, and the handsomest or the highest in station among them made the bride a pretty speech while giving her a nosegay, for which he received a ring from her hands. Then the bridegroom, shut out by the youths from his bride, had to break through the barrier ; the bride's defenders then allowed her to be taken to the church. Indeed they accompanied her, and, at the subsequent banquet, the recipient of the ring made a speech, returning his present, which he had placed in a nosegay, to the bride, whereupon the bridegroom presented him with money to be spent by him and his friends in feasting or masquerading. From Piedmont to the toe of Italy the *serraglio*, in various forms, was a feature of public weddings, the bride only being allowed to get away by giving a bribe, and the husband purchasing her at the banquet. If he neglected this form the girl was held in captivity until he redeemed her. The Lombard custom of paying the bride with the *mor-*

[1] *A. de Gubernatis*, Storia comparata degli usi nuziali, 1878, p. 223.

gengabio only lasted in Italy until the middle of the fourteenth century.

Not merely was marriage subjected to family interests, but the State also had a word to say. At Pesaro and Sinigaglia, a stranger who proposed to marry a woman of those cities must either settle there or forfeit the dower. This regulation was to prevent wealth from being taken out of the commune.[1] Intermarriage with families hostile to the existing Government was often forbidden, and, if effected, the progeny were treated as illegitimate and could not inherit. In Florence the Medici interfered with the marriage of quite small people towards the end of the fifteenth century; under the restored Republic a Strozzi was punished for marrying a Medici, and the Ducal Medici looked sharply after the marriage of their subjects in the sixteenth century. By reason of the peculiar patrician government of Venice a noble marrying a plebeian woman was excluded from the Venetian Council, unless the contract was submitted to the Government and allowed. When, in the fifteenth century, men got to dread the wedded yoke, such gentle persuasion as that of Alessandra Macinghi, who assured her son that "he would not find the devil so black as he is painted," is supported by stronger measures; the Governments of Siena, Lucca, and Città di Castello excluded marriageable bachelors from public office.[2]

The Roman law fixed the nubile age at 12. Villani tells us that, at one time, the Florentines ob-

[1] *E. Rodocanachi*, La femme italienne à l'époque de la Renaissance, 1907, p. 292.

[2] *L. Pastor*, Hist. des papes, Fr. tr. by *Raynauld*, v. 127.

served the sensible custom of not marrying their daughters before the age of 20, and this practice seems to have persisted at Venice. But in other communes the need of strengthening families and healing feuds reduced the age to 12 or 13 years for a girl and two or three more years for a boy. Guido Cavalcanti was married at 8 to a little maiden of 5—one of the Farinati. In the fifteenth century, when family feuds were coming to a close, the age of cohabitation was advanced a couple of years for both sexes; but often the bride of princely family was so young that she only received her first communion just before her wedding. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a girl of 16 was regarded as almost an old maid. Many of the merchants spent the best part of their lives abroad and married late; they preferred young fresh innocent girls for wives, and a youthful bride had, moreover, this great advantage: she might bear a large family, and, in days when plague and disease destroyed so many young lives, early marriage gave a greater chance of some of the offspring reaching maturity. No one thought anything of this "simple sin" as Touchstone hath it, this immolation of the youthful bride. The diaries are full of instances. F. Datini married (1376), at the ripe age of 46, a bride only 15 years younger than himself; it was unwonted to select so old a bride; she bore him no children and endured his resentment in consequence.[1] Luca di Panzano, a Florentine merchant, married (1425) a gentle virtuous girl of 18, he being 32; he records that they lived happily together, and she bore him fifteen children,

[1] *C. Guasti*, Diario d'un notaio—Ser Lappi Mazzei.

all of whom were put out to nurse directly they were born.[1]

When a member of the mercantile class was destined to wed one of noble family the contract was often signed while the couple were still young children; thus Cosimo Rucellai was wedded to Giovanna, daughter of the Marquis of Fordinuovo, when he was 8 and she 5;[2] and even within the mercantile class we find such marriages recorded as that between a man of 25 and a girl-baby.[3] In the State-alliances between princely houses very young children were often married, though, of course, cohabitation was deferred. The famous Caterina Sforza, illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Visconti (begotten when he was 17) was married at 11 to a nephew of Pope Sixtus IV. Wedlock was consummated,[4] but the bride, being delicate, remained for a time with Bona of Savoy, the wife of her father, for her own mother, Lucrezia Landriani, had been married off by her princely lover.

Among princes, consanguinity was no serious bar to matrimony. Ferrante II of Naples married the daughter of his grandfather, whom that ancestor had by the sister of his father. "It causes me horror," wrote a French contemporary, "to speak of such a marriage, of which there have been, during the past

[1] Archiv. stor. it., 5 S., iv.

[2] Nozze Nardi-Arnaldi, Fir., 1881, p. 15.

[3] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., 13-14.

[4] So the Duke, her father, writes to his representative at Rome, 17 Jan., 1473. Six days later he writes again with that coarse directness which shows how superficial in some respects were the refinement and delicacy of the age: "Lui ha dormito con la moglie un'altra volta e viene ben contento et lieto".

thirty years or so, several in that house, which are still green in our memories." [1]

Sometimes a bride was the prize of political or military service. Thus Francesco Sforza ultimately obtained the hand of the illegitimate daughter of Filippo Visconti, though after she had been promised to him she was pledged to two princes; and, early in the preceding century, we find Castruccio Castracani giving his daughter to Filippo Felici, for traitorously putting Pistoja into his hands. Rich or poor, the bride sank her identity in that of the family she entered: Fiametta becomes the "Fiametta of Mona Alessandra," her mother-in-law.[2] When brides were given to heal feuds we can understand how the unhappy girls would feel, dominated by a suspicious husband and under the thumb of a family at enmity with their own.[3] In 1320 the Podestà of Florence entreated contending parties to lay down their arms, for those who should get the upper hand would have small joy of it with the women at home bemoaning slain fathers, brothers and relatives among the vanquished.[4] It is refreshing to come across a few very rare exceptions, where some degree of choice was exercised by unmarried maidens; but they occur late in our period. Near Genoa, many villages lie on spurs of the great chain of riven mountains, each retaining traces of ancient fortifications. In 1545, one of these little strongholds was surprised, sacked, and most of the inhabitants killed. But Giulietta Spinola, a young girl of 12, was

[1] *Philippe de Comines*, Memoires, C., xxx. 31.

[2] Lettere di una gentild. fior., let. 71, p. 599.

[3] *G. Villani*, X, civ.

[4] *Scipione Ammirato*, Storie fiorentine, lib. ix.

found alive in some hiding-place and was taken care of by the Pretor. The news of the sack soon reached Genoa, and Girolamo Spinola, Giulietta's trustee, set out to fetch her; but the badness of the roads caused him considerable delay. Meanwhile the Pretor's daughter, who discovered or was entrusted with the secret that Giulietta and her cousin Paolo felt some tenderness for one another, advised her to marry him; especially as she could enjoy the protection of his castle, which was near. A marriage, of the usual civil form, took place before many witnesses. Giulietta had a big dower, and her trustee, on his arrival, commanded the bridegroom to relinquish his spouse. Paolo refused; but, after much disputation, the Marquis del Vasto, Imperial Vicar at Genoa, intervened, and the bride was hauled off to a convent. An official inquiry was instituted as to whether she had been forced into wedlock. Questioned as to consummation Giulietta did not reply; and as it was suspected that the presence of the nuns made her too shy to speak, they were sent away. She then confessed that she had spent two nights with her husband, and added that she desired to return to him. The Vicar vainly endeavoured to get her uncles and trustees to accept the marriage, and the question of its validity was referred to the Archbishop, who decided that it was valid, and, therefore, a sacrament. The trustees, not to be balked, then appealed to Pope Paul III himself, urging that the pair were cousins-german, and that, even if the marriage were otherwise legal, consanguinity would render it null. Meanwhile Giulietta was removed, first to another convent, where it was deemed impossible for her husband to

hold any communication with her, and thence to the house of a lady of the Spinola family, where she was again interrogated by the Vicar. A new fact was now elicited, and one rather prejudicial to her hopes: she had dwelt for some time at the house of her groom's mother, and it might be urged that she had been unduly influenced in favour of Paolo. But the spirited girl, determined not to be thwarted, contrived to make her escape, gained her spouse's castle and resumed the interrupted honeymoon. This episode ended the matter.[1] Here is struck the authentic modern romantic note!

Great people had an ecclesiastical as well as a civil wedding. When Frederick I of Aragon first saw Eleonora, the daughter of Charles II, at Messina (1303) we read that his nobles drew aside, according to custom. Eleonora, blushing, held out her hand to the King, and Count Catenezari respectfully entreated her to shake it; but, for awhile, she resisted. At last the handshake was given, and the mob shouted, for wedlock had been effected. Then the King withdrew, and, later on, the marriage was sanctified at Mass.[2]

The wealthy usurping rulers repeatedly gave their daughters to foreign princes, relatively poor, but having lineage behind them and a title to their thrones. The object was to achieve more security by gaining the recognition of established thrones. The Visconti of Milan repeatedly married their daughters into the royal houses of England and France in the

[1] *M. Staglieno*, Un'avventura nel castello di Mongiardino, Giorn. stor. e lett. della Liguria, Ottobre, 1900.

[2] *Muratori*, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, x. 104.

fourteenth century, and their example was followed; while ancient houses such as that of Este tried to bolster up their brilliant but weak thrones in the same way. When Ercole d' Este II of Ferrara married Renée the daughter of Louis XII of France, François I, with all that arrogance which marked the beginnings of absolute monarchy, sent word to him that he was to treat his wife in a manner due to a princess of the blood-royal.[1] The marriage was often effected by proxy, the office being usually undertaken by a relative of the bridegroom. The "Beilage" was sometimes employed in Italy by foreign princes, even when marriage was not by proxy;[2] but it was always regarded as a singular custom, except in Savoy, where it was usual for the bride-elect to share the bed of her prospective bridegroom, with a sword between them, and there this habit lingered for a long period.[3] Tristano Sforza, acting for Galeazzo Maria, entered the bed of Bona of Savoy at Amboise, 1468, booted and spurred, and touched her thigh, in the presence of many witnesses, to clinch the marriage. When Filberto II of Savoy was to wed the Archduchess Margaret, one of his brothers met her at Dôle, and, "after dancing had gone on for some time, he lay with her, half-armed, after the usual custom, in the presence of many ladies. For an instant he prevented her from sleeping with delicate pleasantries, then rose, and politely requested

[1] Ercole, thereupon, wrote to an envoy: "con le lusinghe del leto la farò fare quel che vorro"; another evidence of how superficial, in some respects, the refinement of the Renaissance was and how capable of indelicacy. *Vide* note 4, p. 76.

[2] See the author's "Æneas Silvius," 1908, pp. 196-7.

[3] *Cibrario*, Ec. Pol., 389.

a kiss for payment. When she consented he cast himself on his knees and avowed himself her servant till death. But she begged him to rise, wished him a good night, and gave him, besides the kiss, a precious diamond ring."[1] Unconscious babes were often irrevocably wedded by being put into one another's beds.

When the daughter of a reigning house was married, the festivities were on a vast scale, as were all those of political significance, or of people holding prominent positions. At the marriage of Ercole I of Ferrara with Eleonora of Aragon, which took place at Rome, 1473, the banquet lasted from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oxen roasted whole in sweetmeat casings were followed by courses of gilded sheep and every kind of game. When the pies were cut, children fancifully dressed in allegorical costume, and animals were released. The daughter of Marco Attendolo da Cotignola, who, in May, 1464, went to Bologna to wed Giulio Malvezzi, was accompanied to that city by 100 horsemen; the streets were gay with flowers and tapestries and the arms of the Sforza; there was jousting before the palace of the groom under a great pavilion of arras adorned with silk of green, azure and white, and garlands of flowers.[2] At the wedding of Annibale Bentivoglio, chief citizen of the same city (1487), the wedding feast lasted four days; 3000 horsemen, not being citizens, "received such honourable welcome that they went away full of joy and marvelling greatly". Allegorical representations, such as a contest between Chastity and Matri-

[1] *Fugger*, VI, iv. 1135.

[2] *Ronchi*, Le nozze di Giulio Malvezzi.

mony, were followed by a feast which lasted seven hours; and 800 barrels of wine, 30,000 lb. of meat, not counting game, fourteen baskets of herbs, 950 barrels of meal, and 350 lb. of sweetmeats were consumed, the latter being artistically moulded in such forms as that of a pig with apples in his mouth, etc. There were structures of sugar that imprisoned birds, which flew away when their encasements were opened, and a sugar-castle that held a live pig, which amused the ladies by his grunting and efforts to get out.[1] There were often such barbarous amusements as that of a naked man struggling with a cat, which enlivened the wedding of Elisabetta, the gracious duchess of *Il Cortigiano:* the man sustained such serious injuries that he had to be pensioned.[2] At Milan, one wedding banquet consisted of fifteen courses, each being introduced by living specimens of the animals that composed it.[3] The best artists of the day, such giants as Leonardo da Vinci even, were paid to waste their glorious energies on the paste-board successes of a fête-day. The excessive feasting of the time is easily explained, for, owing to imperfect communications between the various parts of Italy, local scarcity was very common, and men and women were glad to make up for it; but, none the less there was a persistence of barbarism and a broad vein of coarse vulgarity in the amusements of the Renaissance that contrast strangely with the glorious beauty of the art with which they were intermingled. Fontana fills

[1] *Sabadino degli Arentino* quoted by *Frati*, Vita privata di Bologna, 55-6; *Nadi*, Diario bolognese, 123-40.

[2] *Luzio e Renier*, Mantova ed Urbino, Torino, 1893.

[3] *Paolo Morigi*, La nobilità di Milano, 1619, p. 353.

eight octavo pages with an enthusiastic detailed description of the marriage-banquet when Ercole II of Ferrara wedded Renée of France.

Everywhere and among all classes a wedding was eagerly pounced upon as an opportunity for merry-making and conviviality. What with vendetta and war and much sickness and plague, folk were keen to grasp every moment of pleasure. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die," is the sentiment apt to occupy the heart when death is alert and no one knows where some grim surprise is hiding. A novel of the fourteenth century tells us of two ladies of Pisa, belonging to opposite parties; on a spring day they are walking together through the green cornfields. "The harvest will be splendid," remarks one; "Yes," replies the other, "for those permitted to see it".[1] All records testify to the passionate seizure of each moment of joy; for the moderation that attends the philosophic life is solely engendered by some measure of security. Public rejoicings at marriages and on every possible occasion were welcomed by all. They were used by rulers and magnates as a convenient trick to keep the commonalty content; no expense was spared, the humblest were gratified by sumptuous spectacle, and a vulgar love of ostentation prompted to these extravagancies, even when they were not politically needed.[2]

At a burgher-wedding, the bride's door would be besieged by a crowd of the lower class, never too well-disposed to their oppressive employers, and coarse jests and gibes would leap from mouth to mouth.

[1] *F. Sacchetti*, nov. 179.

[2] *E. Muntz*, Léonardo da Vinci, 1899, I, 106.

The guests, summoned by personal request, would take their seats in the order due to their rank, at the direction of a master of ceremonies, the men sitting on one side of the table, the women on the other : in earlier times at least. If the family were rich enough to furnish the great luxury of confectionery, the feast would begin and end with sweetmeats, and there would be music, dancing and hired jugglers. Festivity was prolonged for several days. A French wanderer in Naples towards the end of the fifteenth century records how "during a whole week we lived praiseworthily, for my patron made music with all the courtiers, and I had learned to play that kind of fiddle which is called a rebec".[1] The daughter of Luca da Panzano and her spouse stayed in her father's house for eleven days after returning from church.[2] At Genoa also the bride often remained under the parental roof for several days before being taken to her husband's house by her father. At Bergamo there was a curious custom observed : the wedded pair abode together for eight days, and then the bride returned to her father's house for fifteen days.[3] The writer would suggest that this was a relic of the old method whereby the Roman woman retained the freedom of a concubine, though she lost the dignity of a wife, by absenting herself for a definite time from her husband's house. In Florence, the priest who officiated in front of a bridal veil hung to the altar, ordered cohabitation to be postponed for a day and a night on account of

[1] *Philippe de Vignolles*, Arch. st. it., IX.
[2] Arch. stor. it., 5 S. iv. 149-53.
[3] *Rodocanachi*, loc. cit., p. 87.

the sacrament.[1] The bride was conducted to her new home in a torchlight procession, on horseback or afoot. Before her went fifes and trumpets, and she was surrounded by a noisy crowd. This procession was very important, because it gave public evidence of that consent and passage into the power of a husband and his family which constituted marriage; indeed in most places, at least, cohabitation did not begin until the bride entered her husband's house, and, in the sixteenth century, we find the Duke of Mantua writing to Alfonso of Ferrara, entreating him to postpone cohabiting with his daughter during the journey and until she has been received into his palace.[2] At Bologna the bride was taken to her husband's house by her father, sitting behind him on a pillion, if on horseback,[3] but this was not done until all the festivities were over. In Southern Italy the bride, gaily attired, rodè on a milk-white steed, accompanied by an escort. At Rome the bride and bridegroom were given honey on reaching their house, and a sword was hung up over the bride's head as a warning. This was done to Lucrezia Borgia on her second marriage. The bridal procession would precede the bride in some places, dancing gravely as they went, and, preserving some ancient ceremony, she would be presented with the heads of birds and fish.[4] The married couple were solemnly bedded with such jests as might be expected of a plain-spoken people, heated with wine, in an age not remarkable for reserve.[5] The bride's godmother

[1] *L. A. Muratori*, Antiq. Ital., II, diss. XX.

[2] See the author's Tasso and his times, 1907, pp. 240, 241.

[3] *L. Frati*, Nozze Cian-Seppa Flandrani, p. 98.

[4] *Sanudo*, loc. cit., xxvi. 253. [5] *Sacchetti*, nov. 49.

made the nuptial bed at Genoa, and the mother-in-law or some elderly person came in the morning, bearing a cup of soup or some cordial.[1] At Venice the bride, before going to church, sought her parents' room, and, casting herself at their knees, besought them to forgive her for all her trespasses against them. Having thus shown humility and subordination, after the return from the ceremony, which usually took place in the Cathedral, she asserted her new dignity by opening the wedding-ball. Later, taken to the nuptial chamber, she found evidence there of solicitous forethought, for an angel was beautifully painted over the bed, Venetians being credulous as to the result of maternal impressions ![2]

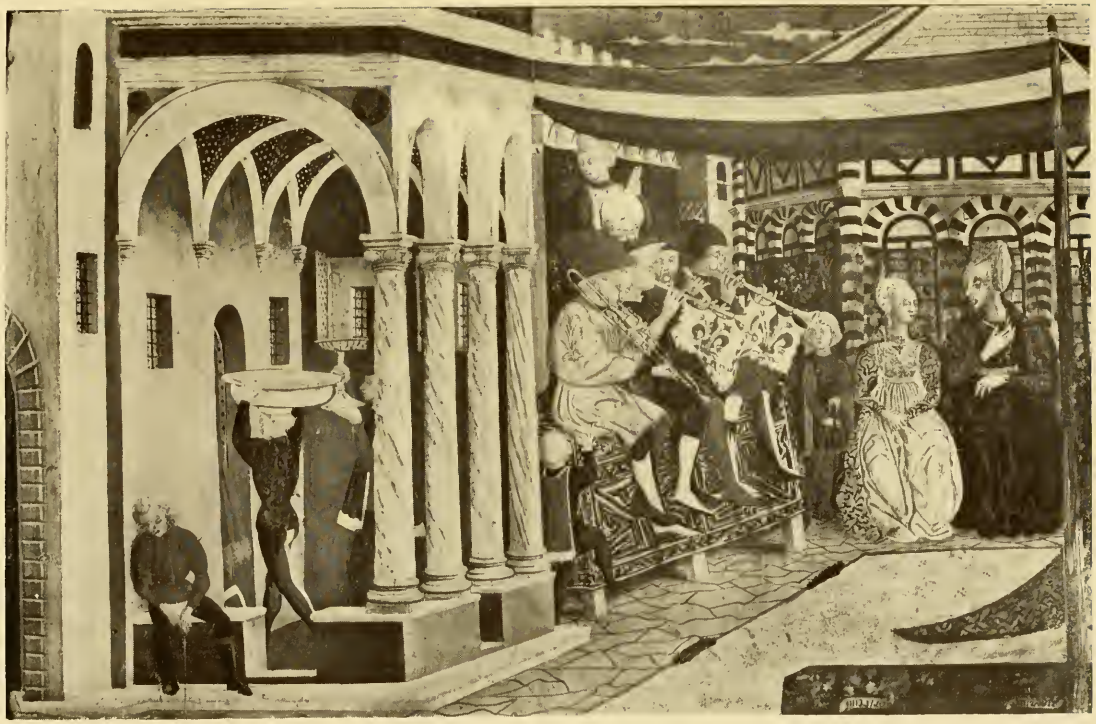
Sunday was the popular day for weddings with the Genoese, and they kept up festivities until the following Friday, dancing and singing and revelling; but no wine or sweetmeats were offered, "for these be signs of dismissal, and, on the last day, the marriage is consummated," says Sacchetti.[3] In Venice, at one time, all the wedding couples gathered together in the Cathedral on a particular day in each January; the brides being decked in white, their hair falling down their backs, but interwoven with gold thread, and each one of them bore a casket that contained her dower. The bishop said mass and then married them, for it was an ancient custom in the city to set apart a day in the year for marriage.[4] Later,

[1] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., 32, 33.

[2] *P. Molmenti*, La storia di Venezia nella vita privata, 1904, ii. 555.

[3] Nov. 154.

[4] *P. Molmenti*, Venezia nella vita privata, 1880, p. 100.



THE WEDDING OF BOCCACCIO ADIMARI AND LISA RICASOLI: No. 1

LEFT-HAND SIDE OF A PICTURE BY AN UNKNOWN ARTIST OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Galleria Reale, Florence

maids were married on Sundays, widows on Saturdays. But on the first Sunday in Lent all the young married women assembled in the Cathedral and showed themselves off in their richest attire, decked in their best, and wearing jewellery, which a German traveller who witnessed the spectacle in 1477, estimates to have been worth 600,000 ducats.[1] Throughout Italy, Wednesday was considered to be a very unlucky day for a wedding, and the month of May was carefully avoided[2]—an ancient prejudice among the vulgar in Ovid's time, for he says they had a proverb that "bad women marry in May". In Southern Italy the ceremony took place at dawn. Usually, in places where there was no fixed day for marriage, the astrologer was applied to to select a fortunate day.

The dress of the bride became very rich with the increase of wealth. Red velvet trimmed with fur and embroidered with gold thread found great favour. "She is bedecked with ornaments and fripperies," says a popular preacher of the first half of the fifteenth century; "she has her ring on her finger; she is polished up for the occasion; her hair is held together by combs, a garland is on her brow; she is blazing with gold, and sits triumphantly a-horseback with more pride than ever was."[3]

Sumptuary laws were vain to put down expenditure in dress; it was a burden to the father; it was an impediment to matrimony; it flaunted wealth, produced by starved and discontented toilers, in their

[1] Die Pilgerfahrt des Ritters *Arnold von Harff*, 1496-9, (*E. von Groote*), Cöln, 1860, p. 10.

[2] *Hutchinson*, Marriage Customs, London, 1897, p. 270.

[3] *S. Bernardino*, Prediche III, 359.

faces ; it cost money that would be useful in wars undertaken to force trade-routes or get command of ports. The character of the dresses, their number, the jewels, the ornaments, the amount of gold to be worn by the bride were all prescribed ; so were the number of women to accompany her, the number of guests to be invited, the number of cooks to be employed, the number of courses at the banquet and what they should contain. At Venice, in 1299, it was decreed that there should be no exchange of wedding-presents except among relatives : this was to prevent money from leaving the family.[1] At Genoa, where vendetta was the rule, only two friends, afterwards eight, might be invited ; and marriages were only allowed to take place on one of the three first days of the week.[2] At Bologna, in 1276 and 1313, we find the hour of marriage fixed and the number of nobles and plebeians allowed to pay complimentary visits strictly limited.[3] In Florence a wedding-cavalcade was strictly limited as to numbers ; as was a wedding procession that went afoot.[4] At Pescia the remains of the banquet are dealt with by statute, and only ten men and six women may sit at the feast.[5] At Florence a sumptuary regulation of 1415 forbade presents of eatables for three days before and three after the wedding, and everybody was to go home at nightfall. At Pisa, in the fourteenth century, women only were allowed to accompany the wedded pair to church, if they went afoot, but fourteen men

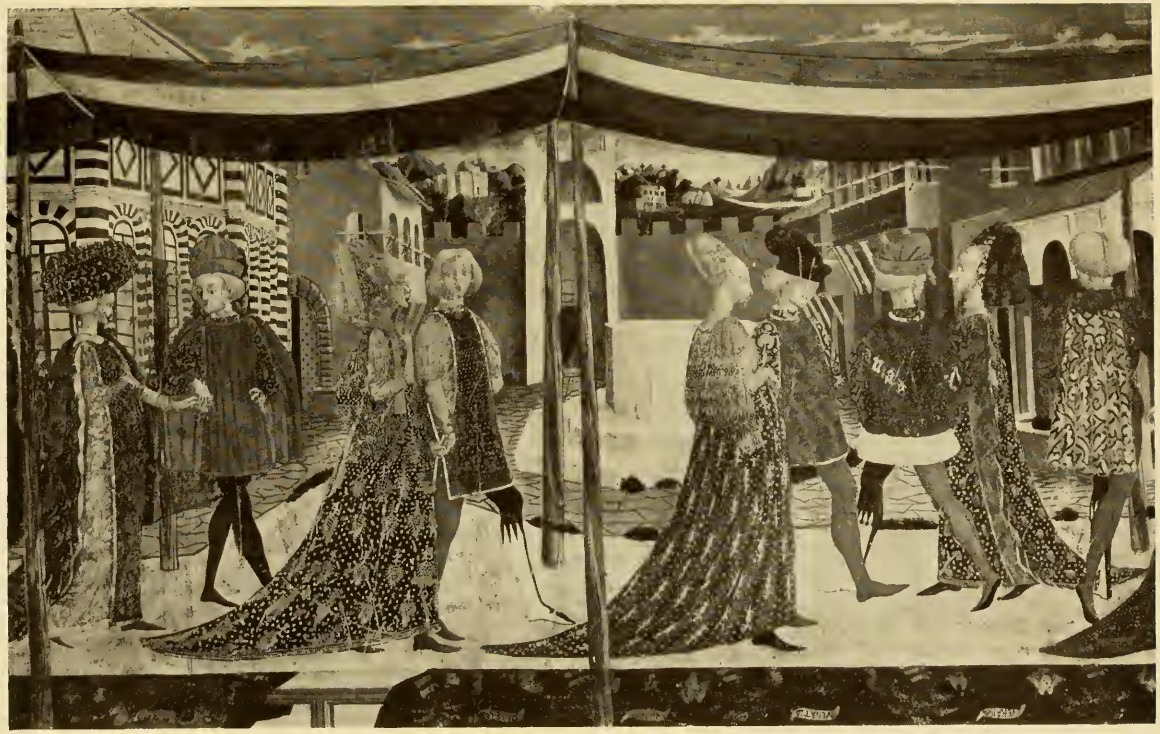
[1] *P. Molmenti*, La dogaressa di Venezia, Torino, 1888, cap. xi.

[2] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., 30, 31.

[3] *L. Frati*, La vita privata bolognese, p. 49.

[4] Statuta Florentiæ, Friburg, 1778.

[5] *C. Stivelli*, La storia di Pescia nella vita privata, Firenze, 1903, p. 101 sqq.



THE WEDDING OF BOCCACCIO ADIMARI AND LISA RICASOLI: No. 2

CENTRAL PORTION OF A PICTURE BY AN UNKNOWN ARTIST OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Galleria Reale, Florence

might bring her back from church. At Lucca, Bologna, and Florence it became necessary to put down such noises as the sounding of horns during the passage of a wedding party—also the throwing of stones and filth at the door of the bride, the stealing of the bed destined for the couple and the sacking of the house, unless special permission had been given.[1] Some of these edicts probably point not so much to coarse pleasantry as to class ill-will. Many of these sumptuary laws are obviously intended to guard against the outbreak of feud and to keep some sort of order in the narrow lanes. They are to be found in abundance, and are frequently repeated and as frequently modified, from the end of the thirteenth century onwards. Whatever the year or place of issue may be they bear on the same matters in the same way ; there is always the same precise attention to the smallest detail ; as in the rules of the trade-association and every public provision of the time, there is the same curtailment of personal liberty. And these harassing restrictions were very numerous in every little state ; but the frequency with which they are reiterated or modified shows how ineffective they were. Exceptions had to be extended to exceptional people, as for example, when a successful merchant held the wedding feast in the street or public square, to the general satisfaction of guests and onlookers alike and of those who waited for the broken bits ; or, as in 1408, when one of the Florentine Alberti married a Genoese lady at Genoa, and the traffic was stopped in certain streets (probably for jousting) ; the money-changers were allowed to close their shops, and ladies might wear what jewellery and fine clothes they pleased.[2]

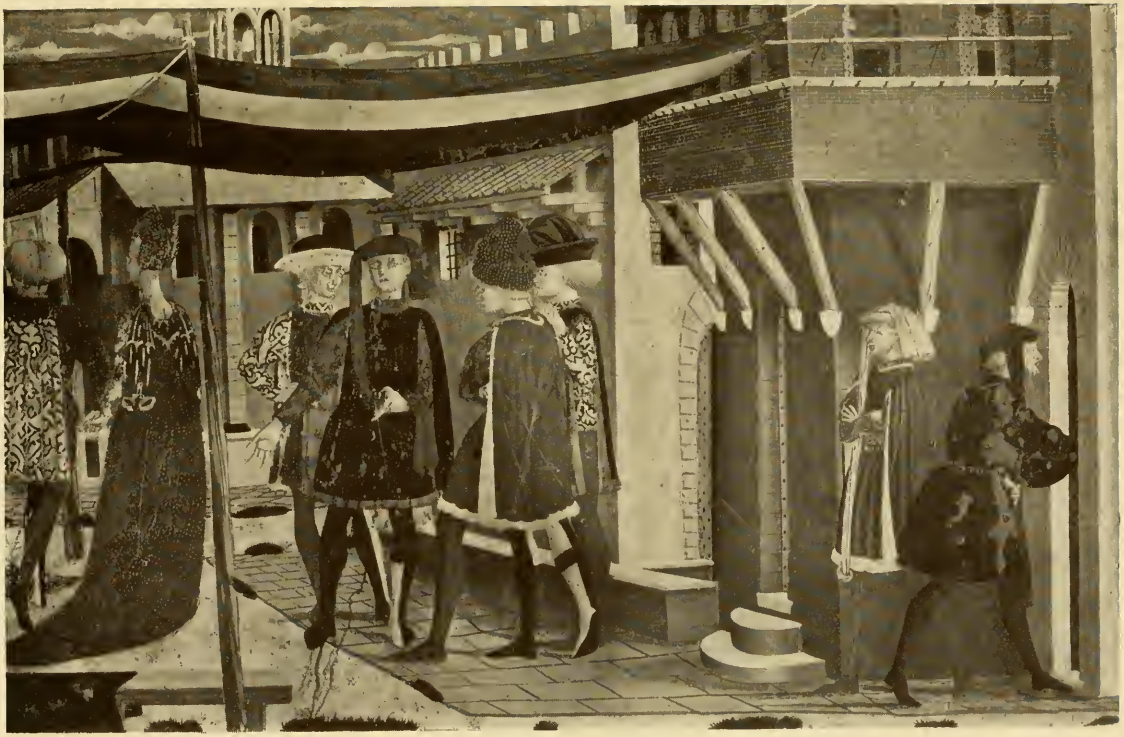
[1] *De Gubernatis*, Usi nuziale, p. 206. [2] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., 31.

Sometimes, however, a marriage was attended with maimed formality, as in cases of exile or still more grievous trouble, such as befell the lord of Arceprete. We read that "few were present when his daughter was married to one of the Oddi of Perugia, for an entirely honourable reason, he being held prisoner in the Castle of St. Angelo".[1]

Luxury at the wedding feast continued to increase even in the sixteenth century: the men of that period looked back with wonder at the simple habits of their grandfathers. "I found," writes one of them, "that, in the year 1467 at the marriage of Niccolò Martelli, and at a supper which the Knight Messer Antonio di Messer Lorenzo Ridolfo gave to the Duke of Calabria, who was passing through [Florence], and whose regard he achieved when ambassador at Naples, and who became his intimate friend; at a banquet given by Giovanni Aldrobrandini, and at others, given by men equal to these citizens of mark and by no means of lean purse, as well as on other occasions of sitting at table together, the same silver appeared, being lent round by the same circle of friends."[2] The famous Company of the Hose, the young bloods of Venetian society, graced the wedding of every high-born Venetian damsel and spent large sums in enhancing the glory of fêtes. Their example was followed by organizations in other towns. In 1568, we find a band of noble youths of Siena accompanying a bride to her new home; each wore his cloak cast jauntily over the shoulder, and meeting one more grandly attired than themselves, they saluted him as a prince, and straight-

[1] Cronaca Perug. med., IX, 205.

[2] *Vincenzo Borghini* (1515-82), Discorsi, 1555.



THE WEDDING OF BOCCACCIO ADIMARI AND LISA RICASOLI: No. 3

RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF A PICTURE BY AN UNKNOWN ARTIST OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Galleria Reale, Florence

way they constituted themselves into a sort of club to give entertainments.[1]

Brides destined to the courts usually travelled to their grooms, the depth of winter being chosen to avoid the fevers of summer and autumn, while Lent is in the spring season. The astrologer was careful to select a favourable day for the start, for it was no small business to pursue the terrible roads, that "were not yet made," to cross perilous torrents, swollen by melting snow, to traverse ice-bound passes, and have to put up in wretched quarters when delayed by foul weather, and sometimes to lack food even. It took Lucrezia Borgia three weeks to get to Ferrara from Rome, Renée three months to reach the same place from Paris. But the monotony of the journey was broken for a very great lady by the festivals given at every halting place. She took keen delight in the firing of cannon, the triumphal arches erected in her honour, the rope-walkers, the jugglers, the allegorical nymphs, with satyrs leaping around but unable to come at them, and all the mummers who were engaged for her amusement.

Besides the dower, the bride took a wedding outfit with her to her new home, and the progressive richness of this outfit indicates, even more clearly than the rapid increase of the dower, how swiftly the wealth of the trading cities increased. In 1321 we find a wealthy bride of Bologna provided with a tiara of pearls, valued at twenty-seven soldi, a towel (evidently regarded as a luxury), two sets of head-gear, a pair of sleeves of different colours (always separate articles from the

[1] *Curzio Mazzei*, La congrega dei Rozzi di Siena, 1882, Vol. II, 358-9.

bodice) and a tress of false hair, valued at forty-five soldi, almost double the worth of the pearls, and presumably intended to increase the volume of her locks. By the middle of the next century we find a bridegroom giving his bride an outfit of six silken caps, a coral necklace, seventeen chemises, thirty pocket handkerchiefs, three dresses, embroidered or trimmed with fur, and small articles, everything reaching a value of 160 florins.[1] When Nannina de' Medici, the sister of Lorenzo, was given to Bernardo de' Rucellai from political motives, she brought him garments and jewels that were valued at 500 gold florins, but that really cost three times as much. "I record to-day," writes a Pescian merchant in 1468, "reverently praising Omnipotent God, His glorious Virgin Mary and all the Celestial Court of Paradise, that I gave Francesca My daughter to Antonio, son of Pietro da Sancte Croce in Valdarno, in wedlock, with a dower of 153 florins under the seal of the Dower-bank at Florence, and forty-seven of Valseno; in all 900 scudi. And I have given her also that which is hereunder written": it is a list of rose-coloured skirts embroidered with silver; azure-blue sleeves and bodice, embroidered; petticoats of Alexandrine silk; green Florentine stuff; crimson waistbands, fringed after the Venetian style; silver damascened girdles with white or green leather; cloth caps with silver scales; red shoes, coloured hose, and other things of strange name, not, so far, interpreted by scholars.[2] The trousseau of Bianca Sforza wedded to Maximilian of Austria, was valued at 100,000 ducats, but gold and silver plate for both

[1] *E. Muntz*, La Renaissance, 1885, p. 63.

[2] *Stiavelli*, loc. cit., p. 182.

private altar and table, mirrors, carpets, bed-hangings, a vast quantity of linen and magnificently worked saddlery were included.

The outfit was kept in a bridal coffer, so large that it was sometimes used as a place of concealment for a lover. Often it was decorated with pictures of some famous master, at no great cost, for artists ranked as artisans and were ill paid until the end of the fifteenth century. In Rome these coffers were painted white; in the north they were carved. Sumptuary laws prohibited their being made of silvered or gilded metal; but the wealthy bride had a separate casket for jewels from the fifteenth century onwards, and this at Venice was often of exquisitely carved ivory.[1]

The bridegroom gave presents to his bride, after the *morgengabio* (*morgencap*) had gone out of fashion. Bastiano Cecchi of Pescia presented his bride with a collar, two bracelets, and two rings, all of gold; she brought him 700 scudi and a *corredo* (trousseau) valued by the nuns of Santa Maria Nuova at 100 scudi. And by the sixteenth century it had become the custom for brides to expect very handsome gifts from the groom. Of course sumptuary laws were passed to restrict this extravagance. In 1332 a Pistojese husband might not give his bride more than two rings of the total value of two golden florins; at Florence, fifty-two years later, he was still restricted to two rings, but their total value might reach six times this amount; in 1412 three rings were allowed at Siena.[2] In 1415 Florentine ladies were strictly limited as to

[1] *Molmenti*, La storia di Venezia, etc., 1904, II, 202.

[2] *M. Giuliani*, La prammatica senese per le nozze, Siena, 1879, p. 12.

the *corredo* and gifts to their husbands.[1] In 1487 it was strictly forbidden to prospective spouses to interchange gifts, and in 1526, at Aquila, a bride was prohibited from receiving gifts, except from her husband or some member of his house, and then the value must not exceed five ducats, though her father or mother might receive as much again.[2]

Needless to say, all this legislation was impotent. Gifts were made, not merely by the prospective bridegroom but by friends, and, in the case of intermarriage between important families, by all who wished to curry favour with them. At Genoa presents were sent to the bride's house with ostentatious publicity; dresses were put on stands to set them off, and then carried through the public streets. The law forbade this practice in 1571, but the prohibition was ignored.[3] At Rome the fashion of exhibiting nuptial gifts also obtained, and legislation was directed against it in 1576. Sometimes, notwithstanding severe sumptuary edicts, contributions in kind came to the feast: the government had so many exceptions to make, and its own members and strong supporters had a special claim! In 1464 Giulio Malvese received 264 pairs of pullets and capons, 103 eggs, 238 kids and 96 boxes of sweetmeats, not to speak of other gifts.[4] At the feast which celebrated the union of Bernardo de' Ruccellai and Nannini de' Medici, already alluded to —a political feast—the father of the groom first recounts, with a trader's detailed precision, the twenty

[1] *De Gubernatis*, loc. cit., p. 134.

[2] Gli statuti aquilani, Aquila, 1890, p. 13.

[3] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., pp. 26-7.

[4] Le nozze di *Giulio Malvezzi*.

rings given to the bride, and her dresses and jewels, and how her husband gave her six rings, two when he came to take her, two when he married her, two the morning after the wedding (a relic of the *morgengabio*)—towards the end of the fifteenth century this—then he tells us that the supporters of the Medici sent heifers, Greek wine, capons, cheese, geese, red wine of the country, fresh quails and all sorts of eatables for the feast, which nevertheless cost 6,638 florins.[1] The trousseau cost 1,500 florins and the dower was 2,500 florins, declared at $\frac{1}{5}$ the value.

At Venice, at the end of the sixteenth century, when quite 300 guests were invited to a patrician's wedding, from 40 to 200 ducats would be given to each witness to the marriage; the couple were presented with eggs and pastry, and the bride with a basket, needle-case and thimble, finely chased.[3] Whatever other presents may have been given she received these, and also epithalamia, written by guests with a taste for letters or by scholars whom they hired for the purpose. These wedding verses were recited at the wedding feast and were then handed over to the bride.

[1] *Marcotti*, Nozze Nardi-Arnaldi, For., 1881, pp. 82, sqq.

[2] *Sanudo*, loc. cit., XI, 471.

[3] *F. Mutinelli*, Costume Veneziano, c. VII.

CHAPTER IV

THE WEDDED PAIR

GUICCIARDINI, in his Ricordi, speaks of marriage as an alliance between families, determined by the need of political cohesion or by the opportunity of adding to wealth and of increasing power. The best kind of married life one would expect under these conditions would be a perfunctory discharge of duty and that kind of affection which grows from the habitual association of people not violently antipathetic. But it must be remembered that, ordinarily, the family councils which decided marriages were neighbours; they knew all about everybody in their quarter, and often chose more wisely for their young charges than these would have done for themselves. We know from the letters of Lucrezia Tornabuoni and Alessandra Macinghi that mothers had a keen eye for physical and moral qualities and defects in possible daughters-in-law. If there is little evidence of amatory passion in wedded life, there is much of conjugal attachment; pairs seem to have got on together pretty much as wedded folk do under conditions of greater freedom. The most valuable evidence is contained in letters and diaries which have been preserved, though Alberti lets us know that a wife could even love her husband with passionate devotion and be fiercely and causelessly jealous of him. He tells us, too, how a

young jade, recently married, would pique and coax and wheedle her spouse.

"Bice, my first wife," writes Messer Donati Velluti, "was the daughter of Messer Covone de' Covoni, and I took her in January 1340, the year that her father died. She was a little woman and not pretty, but sagacious, good, kindly, well-mannered and full of every virtue, and perfect. She loved everybody and wished them well, and I can but extol her, for she loved me and was fain of me with all her heart. She was a most worthy soul, and there is reason to believe that Our Lord Jesus Christ has received her into his arms, since she did good—nay the best deeds, giving alms, praying, and often resorting to church. . . . She lived with me in blessed peace and got me favour, honour and possessions enough. She was very sick of the pestilence in 1348, from which not one in an hundred escaped. By the grace of God, and happily for me, who truly believed that if she died I should not escape, I did not suffer from that sickness. She died July 1357, after living with me seventeen years. God rest her soul."[1] The letters of Dora del Bene to her husband, who was Vicar of the Commune in the Val di Nievole, in the second half of the fourteenth century, are all too few and all too short. The girls are with the mother in *villegiatura*, the boys are with the father, in training for active life. Dora addresses her husband formally as "very dear," "a venerable man," "very wise and discreet," "one worthy of the utmost respect," but she can also tell him, "we are all well, God be praised, but we should be still better could we be with you. Good-bye. Thy Dora com-

[1] *D'Ancona* e *Bacci*, Manuale delle lett. ital., 1904, i. 577-8.

mends her to thee with a thousand good wishes"; and she is an adept at arousing love by the pretence of wifely jealousy and suspicion; she ends one letter with the signature "Dora, thine enemy".[1] Giovanni Rucellai thanks God "for granting me a most worthy lady, Jacopa, daughter of Messer Palla di Nofri Strozzi, who was a very dear lady to me and a good housewife and mother, preserved to me long, for she lived about fifty-five years and departed this life Ap. 24, 1418, and this I account the greatest loss I ever suffered or ever could have."[2] Giovanni d' Antonio di Neri, commissioner in Talamone, writes to his government, 20 July, 1482, concerning certain military preparations, but, in a jocular postscript, he shows his anxiety to be at home. "Let me return as soon as your lordships can, that my wife may not have to remarry."[3] We find a husband so devoted to his wife that, when he lost her, he became a Barnabite.[4] Castiglione tells the tale of a husband who was captured by Moors, but, being rescued by his son, he wrote to his wife to give her the joyful news, whereupon "the honest gentlewoman was filled with so great and sodeine joy that she should shortlye, as well as through the zeal as powers of her sonne, see her husband whom she loved so much, where she once surelye beleaved never to have seen him again, after she had read the letter she lifted up her eyes to heaven and calling upon the name of her husband, fell starke dead to the grounde".[5] Camilla Scamparo,

[1] *P. Dazzi*, Lett. cur. fasc. XC, Bologna, 1868, pp. 46-55.

[2] Nozze Nardi-Arnaldi, 49-50.

[3] *L. Zdekauer*, Lettere volgare del rinascimento, p. 243, note i.

[4] *Marcotti*, Donne e monache, 257.

[5] Book of the Courtier, Tudor Tr., 1900, p. 238.

hearing that her husband had been executed during the invasion of Italy by the French, "fell on her knees and prayed the Lord to take her life also, and, indeed, she was taken up dead".[1] One of the Panigarola, a turbulent soul, being condemned to death, his wife, during a visit to him in his prison, contrived to change clothes with him and enabled him to escape.[2] Violantina Giustiniani of Genoa, whose fame as a model of modesty spread over the Christian world, is said to have loved her husband so dearly that his misfortunes killed her.[3]

In the middle of the fifteenth century we find a lady (whom nature certainly never moulded for a celibate life) writing to Priore Banchi, her husband, a large cheese-factor who was away at Palermo, in the frank, direct and unreserved way of her time: "Now, seeing that you have not returned, we are all getting desperate. Nay, but you promised me you would come back in four months, and here we are at the beginning of the New Year, and I shall never believe you again, you having promised and sworn you would return. I vowed not to write again, yet I break my oath because Priore Ottavanti has come . . . he will take this, so you will not be able to say you did not get it. And I tell you this much to fetch you back, that I do not wish to remain in this state, being in the fires of the Devil. You are the cause, for it is not one month nor two, but a whole twelvemonth today. Christ preserve you long—as long as my wish is for. I am well, but malcontent, so much do I desire

[1] *Bandello*, I, 13.

[2] *Cinthio* (G. B. Giraldi) Ecatommiti, Cena II, nov. 3.

[3] *Giuseppe Bertussi*, Delle donne illustri, 1596, p. 376.

you. I pray you keep your health above all other things."[1] Isabella Sacchetti Guicciardini writes to her absent husband (1517), "Realize what my condition is, always remembering that I cannot see you. . . . Do you think I am so happy, with two little maids, sometimes seeing folk and chattering, but mostly writing and praying and chaffering and keeping my accounts."[2]

Usually the letters interchanged between husband and wife exhibit good feeling but no undue warmth; two may be quoted as fair specimens. Laura Ugurgieri writes to Giovanni Mignanelli (1525?): "I will say nothing about your return, because I think that will be as soon as you are able. No more at present. Our Lord keep you long in happiness. Your dear consort, Laura Ugurgieri." Jacopo d' Antonia writes "to the most prudent Donna Taverna, 18th Feb. 1456, "Dearest lady . . . I have been to Batingnano and seen the boy" (a child put out to nurse, after the habit of the time) "and he is well, fresh as a rose. Whenever I see Agnese I see him and give the whole neighbourhood a festival-time. . . . Commend me to the children. Christ be thy safeguard."[3]

Galeazzo Marescotti di Calvi, whose acquaintance we have already made as love-servitor of Camilla Malvezzi, married a gentle lady to whom he bore great affection; he lost her in 1503 when he was an old man, and Leandro Alberti tells us "he lived with her so long in so much love and sincerity that he often

[1] *L. Zdekauer*, Lett. volg., p. 243.

[2] *L. A. Ferrai*, Lorenzino de' Medici e la società cortigiana del cinquecento, Milano, 1897.

[3] *Zdekauer*, Lett. volg., p. 246.

affirmed never to have known another lady than she, since he took her to wife"—a statement which throws a lurid light on the observation of marital troth. Giovanni Pontano, a scholar and statesman, would seem to have loved his wife, Adriana Sassone, tenderly; he speaks of her as an adorable woman, a household goddess; he bemoans her death, yet he failed to hold conjugal faith with her, and within a year of her death we find him, now an old man, keeping a concubine.[1] Whatever their own shortcomings, husbands were tolerantly treated by their wives and speak of them with affection in their diaries; the union is often described, as in the case of Marco Parenti (1481), as "most pleasant and agreeable," and the deceased wife as "kindly and worthy and of admirable and virtuous conduct"; the "garb of the religious" (mourning) provided for sorrowing relatives is set out as to quantity, etc., with true merchant-like precision, as well as the "honourable sepulture" that has been given.[2] A husband might be bitter to his wife, yet be obliged to confess that she is "the mast of the ship".[3] The truth is that wives found it wise to close their eyes to the peccadilloes of their husbands, who rewarded them with their firm confidence. This tolerance is remarkable, as we shall see when we come to deal with the subject of illegitimate children, though in the High Renaissance, Beatrice d' Este took the modern course of making her husband, Ludovico the Moor, put away his bastards. Yet her sister Isabella d' Este, the typical great lady of the Renaissance, a woman

[1] *V. Rossi*, Il quattrocento, p. 340.

[2] See diaries in Archivio storico italiano.

[3] *Guasti*, Ser Lapo Mazzei, Prœmio, LXXVI.

jealous of her sister, indifferent to her girls, but passionately fond of her boy, ravenous for enjoyment, a good judge of literature, an irritating and exacting patroness of artists, a consummate stateswoman, was a tolerant and loving wife to a stern and unfaithful husband. "Prithee, mock not my letter," she writes on one occasion, "nor say that all women are poor things and ever smitten by dread; for the malignity of others far exceedeth my fear and your lordship's mettle. I should have written this letter with mine own hand, but 'tis so hot that, an it last, we are like to die. The little knave is very well and sendeth a kiss to your lordship, and as for me I do ever commend myself to you. Longing to see your lordship, Isabella (this with mine own hand)." And again, "But even if you should treat me badly I would never cease to do what is right, and the less love you show me the more I shall always show you; because, in truth, this love is part of myself, and because I became your wife so young that I can never remember being without it."[1] Possibly the early age at which girls were married, usually to husbands much older than themselves, fixed that habit of affectionate submission to which their home-training was directed. Machiavelli, by no means a devoted husband, had a faithful wife who lived with him on affectionate terms in spite of his infidelities. An undated letter of hers is preserved, written after the birth of a son, when he was away at Rome in a time of pestilence: "Imagine if I can be happy when I can rest neither

[1] For an account of the D'Este sisters see *Mrs. J. Cartwright's* Beatrice d'Este, 1899 and Isabella d'Este, 1903; also *Luzio e Renier*, Mantova e Urbino.

night nor day. The baby is well and resembles you. He is as white as snow, but his head is like a bit of black velvet, and he is as hairy as you are. And his resemblance to you makes me think him beautiful, and he is as lively as though he were a year old, and he opened his eyes before he was quite born and made his voice heard all over the house. Our little girl is not at all well. Be sure to come back."[1]

Women marrying into a noble house almost invariably conducted themselves in a very correct manner. Their marriage, having been made for high reasons of state, it behoved them to do so. Loose behaviour was liable to interruption. It might imply the scaffold, or in the sixteenth century, when the power of little princes became somewhat circumscribed, a mysterious disappearance of the lover or the unexpected demise of oneself. Lucrezia Borgia, a not unamiable but pliable sort of person, who certainly had borne one illegitimate child and had been exposed to the vicious surroundings of her father's court, became a model spouse and died (1519) sincerely regretted by her husband. But it would seem that widows were apt to console themselves,[2] and the novels give abundant evidence of the frequency of infidelity on the part of burghers' wives during the prolonged travels of their husbands. Boccaccio's merchant, residing at Paris, plumes himself that, by the special grace of God, he has a wife at home who is incomparable. She is beautiful, young, healthy, discreet, skilled as a lady should be in embroidery and such matters, wherein she excels others. No one can serve better at table ; she can shoe a horse

[1] *P. Villari*, Machiavelli, tr. 1892, ii. 263.

[2] *Bargagli*, nov. 5

and hold a falcon (vestigial traits of the aristocracy turned citizens). She can read, write and give her reason for an opinion like a merchant (qualities valuable to a trader during absence from his shop), and her final distinction is that no honester or chaster woman is anywhere to be found.[1] We find the infidelity of a wife more strongly resented by the trading class as time goes on. In Sacchetti's time (fourteenth century) a beating equalized matters, it would seem. The business man's strong sense of property was strengthened by success and by the partial emergence of the individual from the control of his guild ; and this sense tightened family discipline, already based on some degree of affection. As we have said before, some kind of sympathetic regard seems, as a rule, to have sprung up between husband and wife.

There are evidences of family jars, little quarrels and reconciliations. Books were dear, and there was no tobacco ; the husband was apt to sit out in the lane gambling (the substitute for the modern theatre or club), and his amusements were not always approved of by the censor of morals at home. Curtain-lectures were not unknown.[2] A husband has to be gently reminded by a friend that "we have anxieties to which women are unaccustomed, and you are a very stormy person".[3] Tommasina, wife of Polcenigo, bequeaths 100 lire for the repose of the soul of her dead husband, but she would prefer to be buried beside her father.[4] Sometimes the begging friars, the pet religious advisers of womankind, set up domestic strife. The noble but

[1] Decameron, Gior II, nov. 9. [2] *Sacchetti*, nov. 64.

[3] *Guasti*, loc. cit., Ser Mazzei to Francesco Datini, I, 416.

[4] *Marcotti*, Donne e monache, p. 89.

indiscreet enthusiasm of such men as Savonarola disturbed the tranquillity of many homes. Everybody, husband and wife, father and children wrangled about Savonarola; nothing was heard but terrible threats; the mother-in-law turned her son's wife out of doors, the husband his wife, and the only thing on which they agreed was their desire to dwell apart. Women wrote secretly to Savonarola to reveal how their husbands were plotting against him.[1] Fra Cherubino of Siena composed a book of rules for the conduct of married life, and this theological casuistry about intimate relations was translated from Latin into the vulgar tongue.

The evidence of real unhappiness is less than one would expect. Yet the popular poetry of the peasantry, while it is full of the throbbings of spontaneous affection, usually very pure, tells us of the rebellion of joyous youth, repressed by parental authority, of the unhappiness of wedded life, as well as of the repugnance, not too modestly expressed, of the girl compelled to go to a nunnery, and her joy when she makes her escape with a lover. Pieraccio Tebaldi, a contemporary of Dante, bemoans his fate as a husband. Sometimes the relief of divorce was obtained on ecclesiastical grounds. Thus, in 1213, Ottone, an archdeacon, and Magister Ugo, a canon, were delegated to hear the appeal of one Gandolfo of Trojola to be released from his bonds to Giovanna di Sestri on the ground that he was dedicated to God before his marriage was arranged. Ugo Fornari, a merchant who had returned to Genoa from Turin, made public declaration (and the document still exists) that he

[1] *T. Perrens*, Savonarola, sa vie, s. prédications, s. écrits, 210.

wished to be set free from matrimonial obligations, for he has searched the neighbourhood for his wife Alda and cannot find her, much to his chagrin. Where the bishop had power in the government, in these early days, he sometimes tried to compose matrimonial disputes. In 1222, Giovanni, archdeacon, sitting as the representative of episcopal authority, ordered Pietro di Ortexto to take his wife Druda back into his father's house (it was the custom for the younger generations to reside under the ancestral roof), and treat her with due conjugal love, sharing with her the same bed, and the same trencher at meals at the same table, and not taking any concubine into the abode and in all ways treating the said Druda as a good husband should.[1]

Divorce, so easy in Roman times at the wish of either party, was very frequent in the earlier part of the period under our consideration. A document was drawn up, setting forth that it was by mutual consent.[2] At Siena, in the thirteenth century, couples would separate, heavy penalties being payable if either party should molest the other afterwards; and a woman could obtain her freedom by simply alleging previous marriage; nor does it appear to have been necessary for her to give the name of the previous husband. In fact the government made use of any ecclesiastical justification; it took to itself a right claimed by the Church under certain conditions.[3] At Genoa, where the Church was strong, we find that on 2 May, 1384,

[1] *Belgrano*, loc. cit., p. 415.

[2] *Marcotti*, Donne e monache, pp. 73, 74.

[3] *Zdekauer*, Per la storia del divorzio, Boll. sen. di stor. patria, ann. V, fasc. II.

at the church of Santa Maria dei Servi, one Antonio, a wool-dealer, and his wife, Santina, made public declaration that, since the wife had committed adultery on many occasions, both at home and elsewhere, sometimes taking money, the husband absolves her for the sake of peace and to his pecuniary advantage, she having paid forty florins to the Bank of Gregorio Squarcifacio; and, further, he allows her to take and hold a friend, while, on her part, the wife grants Antonio the right to take and hold a concubine, and neither party shall thereby incur any penalty.[1] This is one among the many records of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which raise doubts in the reflective mind as to the extent to which the solvent culture of the Renaissance may be said to have undermined the religious and moral sense of the Italian people. Often reconciliation takes place between unfaithful couples; sometimes an adulterous husband agrees to a separation on condition that his wife lead a chaste life.[2] We shall have more to say concerning conjugal infidelity when we come to investigate the moral standard of the times, but we may remark here that, as might be expected, the loose and facile form of civil marriage ordinarily employed made bigamy common. It was punishable in all states; by fine or, in default, by flogging at Genoa in the thirteenth century; in Bologna, 1489, the same law obtained, but in very bad cases a death-penalty could be inflicted. A wife making a false accusation against her husband was liable, in Florence, even as late as the sixteenth century, to have her ears cropped, her forehead branded, to be put on a donkey, wearing

[1] *Belgrano*, loc. cit., p. 419. [2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., pp. 73, 74.

a mitre on her head, and driven out of the city, nor allowed to return to it for five years.

"Woman, good or bad, needs the stick" was an old Tuscan proverb, and the stick was liberally employed by husbands, on occasion, though too severe a beating was punishable by law. Fra Filippo advises husbands to castigate their wives if they paint the face; St. Bernardino recommends a thrashing to be administered with judgment; we learn from Sacchetti what a woman might undergo at the hands of a bad husband.[1] In spite of the partial emancipation of the women of the upper class, we find writers, from Petrarch (who instructs that a woman is to be beaten on occasion) down to Sperone Speroni, who flourished in the sixteenth century, and writers later than he even, inflexibly asserting the supreme authority of the male sex. The courtly service and practical treatment of womanhood were by no means in unison, yet with such motley do we clothe the mind that not the slightest sense of incongruity was felt.

Painful cases of marital indifference are rare: they are most commonly to be found in court-circles. Such an one is that of Alfonso d' Este, of a proud and ancient Guelphic house, heir to the dukedom of Ferrara, who was married in 1558 to Lucrezia, of those plebeian Medici who had by this time become the powerful princes of Tuscany. The Estensi regarded the rival house as upstarts. Three days after the wedding the bridegroom set off to enjoy himself at Paris, leaving one Francesco da Susena to spy on his bride and tell him all that the poor solitary, deserted girl said or did. Lucrezia, a rather plain girl, found herself despised

[1] Nov. 86.

and snubbed by her new relatives. Susena's reports to his employer make pitiful reading. Soon he writes : "The letters of your Highness to the Lady Princess have been very dear to her, so far as I have heard, and will be dearer still if you persevere in writing to her or to me in such a way that I can show them as proof of your affection. . . . And, whether it be from suffering because your Eminence is so far away, or because of the heat, which is great, or whatever it may be of those things which young women think of when they are piqued by men, she is, as we observe, distraught, drooping, and does not eat" (whereof the duke and duchess made much fun). A little later we read : "To tell the truth, she wants the gratification of letters from you. . . . It is desirable that you should put on a little semblance of love, at least in writing, even if it goes against your mind ; for, if you could know how it would gratify this Court, and her above all, if your Eminence were to make a few pleasing remarks, you would not be slow to grant this satisfaction." Four days later Susena writes that he has eaten up the dishes prepared for the Princess, "for she swallows no more than a little lizard, rarely laughs or speaks, and keeps herself shut up alone". A pious person is sent to give her consolation. Still later the honest fellow writes : "It is serious to have no letters from you, not on my account, for with me you can deal according to your good pleasure, but for the Princess. I cannot summon sufficient courage to go into her presence, being unable to take her either letter or message." At last a letter arrived, "which she received with joy unmeasured, and read and re-read it many times". Poor solitary princess, hungering for

affection! she was shut up in her room, and cast herself at her mother-in-law's feet, entreating that she "might leave this prison". She was only fourteen, scarcely a woman in appearance; her husband, four years older, was the devotee of pleasure and military exercises. The poor child felt so ill and depressed that she thought she must be pregnant; she yearned for the consolation of another baby to love and play with. Alfonso made many promises to return, but seized on every excuse to postpone the objectionable day. The little bride drifted into melancholy, and three years after her wedding-day her husband buried her with great pomp, as befitted the dignity of his house.[1] Some people were of the opinion of Jacopo, Count of Porcia, who wrote to Bernardino Bellino: "the man who is too fond of his wife is worse than an adulterer". But then it was believed that great continence was necessary if one wished for boys; which explained why old men begat more males than young men.[2]

Every now and then one comes across a touch of modern feeling in the relationship of husband and wife. Boccaccio and his successors are fond of making their romances terminate in wedlock; Francesco of Carrara exposed himself to a thousand perils in travelling by land, for he always would have his wife with him, and she suffered severely at sea. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we get romantic sentiment. Veronica Gambara, famous for her beauty and accomplishments, a woman not likely to share the prejudice of the middle classes against the re-marriage of widows,

[1] *G. E. Saltini*, Tragedie Medicee domestiche.

[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 253-4.

had been a second wife: she remained faithful to her husband's memory and found solace in writing and educating her children. Vittoria Colonna, the immortal poetess, remembered her husband, the Marquess of Pescara, disloyal to her and others as he had been, as the playmate of her childhood and the husband of her youth; she refused the great love of Michelangelo. Bernardo Tasso, the father of a still greater poet, found himself by the death of a "sweet young wife," "deprived of every hope of happiness, every prospect of consolation"; he acknowledges that he weeps for her night and day. And we have a remarkable instance of the devoted wife in Elisabetta, the noble and gracious lady of *Il Cortigiano*. Married to Guidobaldo of Urbino, she felt very deserted, very sad, when she was taken to her new home and left alone there with a husband who was a stranger. But she clove to him, under unnatural conditions, with the tenacity of affection and the devotion of welcome duty. Castiglione makes Cesare Gonzaga exclaim concerning her, after he has cited examples of chastity before the most refined group of gentlemen and ladies in Italy, with a nakedness of phrase that would cause consternation in any polite circle of to-day, if indeed such a thing were possible, "'I can no longer keep from saying a word in reference to our duchess, who during fifteen years of living with her husband, even as a widow, has not only uttered no word on the subject to a single soul, but, when she was urged by her own relatives to forsake this widowhood, chose rather to suffer exile, poverty and all unhappiness, consequent on the overthrow of the duke's power by Cesare Borgia, than agree to that which to everybody

else seemed the greatest favour and prosperity of fortune'. And as he was proceeding thus the duchess interrupted with, 'Speak of something else and no more of this, for you have enough to say on other matters'." Elizabeth clove to Guidobaldo through sickness, the loss of his dukedom, and painful exile, with unwavering devotion. Alexander VI offered to give her a divorce so that she might marry some one else, and Cesare Borgia offered her a liberal pension if she would accede. Guidobaldo urged it when he heard of the plots of the Borgia against him, and "gave them hope of being able to divorce himself and his wife, for he was impotent and desired to become a monk".[1] It is characteristic of the times that this "sterility of the bed of Guidobaldo and his duchess was said to be due to the magic arts of Ottaviano Ubaldini, so that his beloved son, Bernardino, might come to the throne".[2] Maulde La Clavière thinks the duchess set a fashion—the adaptation of marriage to an ascetic ideal.[3] Truly, Vittoria Colonna was her friend and also Giulia Gonzaga, Countess of Fondi, who, according to P. Giovio, refused to allow her marriage to be consummated. But this course was no novelty. Instances occur in the Middle Ages, and Violante of Urbino who, by desire of Pope Eugenius IV was married when a child to Malatesta Novello in the early years of the fifteenth century—a marriage designed to secure peace between rival houses—lived an ascetic life with the full consent of her husband and took the veil after his death.[4]

[1] *P. Bembo*, De Urbini Ducibus.

[2] *Baldi*, Vita di Guidobaldini, Milano, 1821, p. 103.

[3] Les femmes de la Renaissance, 1898, p. 52.

[4] *Clementini*, Storia di Rimini, ii, 277.

Marcotti deduces from an examination of wills that wives usually entertained more affection for the second than for the first husband;[1] and perhaps an experienced woman would not readily allow herself to be given to an unsuitable spouse. But one widow leaves her second husband all her goods with the sentimental exception of the girdle, the token of virginity, which her first husband gave her, and she directs that this shall be buried with her. Another leaves money for the repose of the souls of both her husbands.

Sometimes wives and mistresses obtained a remarkable ascendancy over their lords. This was the case with Bianca, the wife of Francesco Sforza; Bona of Savoy, the wife of Galeazzo Sforza; and Beatrice d' Este, the wife of Ludovico the Moor. By strength of character, sweetness of bearing, and tact, these women managed their husbands, men difficult to deal with, in a marvellous manner; their lords wandered into forbidden paths, it is true, but they loved and reverenced their wives, they returned to them and sometimes deferentially submitted to their authority. Another remarkable instance is afforded by the plain-featured, unlettered but wily and womanly Isotta, the mistress of that truculent though cultivated tyrant, Sigismondo Malatesta. Isotta secured the lifelong devotion of this prodigious ruffian, when most women would have met with a speedy and tragic fate. She wheedled, cajoled and tantalized the most difficult man in Italy into matrimony, and was entrusted with the government of a troublesome state when he was away at the wars. She was discontented with the position of mistress, though from Roman times, the concubine of

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., pp. 89, 90.

a prince, at least, held no very dishonourable or unenviable position among women. She had resisted the first advances of Sigismondo for some time, and now, in her turn, she had to beseech. Two years before she gained her point she indited (for she was unable to write with her own hand) a letter full of seeming timidity and humbleness, inspired, really, by daring; she mingles tenderness with scorn, she even ventures on satire, she does not withhold reproaches or disguise the anger of one who loves and is betrayed, but she astutely follows up the calculated outburst with soft weakness, deemed appropriate to her sex, and very effective with men, if judiciously displayed. The reader shall judge if the letter be not a paragon of womanly strategy. "My Lord, I have received the letter wherein your lordship swears that you love me more than ever. I am sure of it, and I wish to believe it, and I should feel surer still if you would put an end to what always keeps me furious. As concerning what your lordship desires more than I, I ask it as a boon, even if you do not eagerly desire it, as you love me, that your lordship, wishing to preserve my life and peace, will desire this thing also, and effect a regular marriage as soon as you can.

"As to the passage wherein your lordship writes me that I should not reply to your letter, being always suspicious and full of jealousy, I am positively assured that you have been unfaithful with the daughter of Signor G. . . . and, moved by these two passions that possess me, it seemed to me that the least restraint I could put on myself is to show my resentment, and that is why your lordship found my letter a little sharp. Your lordship also says you will write no

more; when I read this I told myself nothing was wanting to complete my discontent. I entreat your lordship, if you love me as you say, not to deprive me of the only compensation I have for your absence. Will you take pity on me, poor little thing that I am? Our Malatesta is well and was very gleeful at getting the little horse. All our other boys and girls are also well. I commend me a thousand times to your lordship. Dec. 20, 1454. Isotta di Rimini."[1]

[1] From facsimile of letter. *Yriarte*, Un condottiere au 15° siècle, 1882, pp. 157-8.

CHAPTER V

PASSION AND FLIRTATION

THE artificial restrictions of social usage were drawn tight, but nature is strong; passion laughed at bolts and scaled the highest wall. Allurement lurked in the novel; love peeped between the window-shutters at maid and wife and widow. Barberino insisted that maidens should be always kept in sight by the mother or some qualified matron; Bisticci recommends the company of trustworthy servants or pious people, nor should any girl over seven speak to any male; and, at the height of the Renaissance, Castiglione demands that the young girl should be an unenlightened simpleton ('tis a security for innocence that still finds great favour with the Latin races). But, indeed, it was necessary to impress on every mother the importance of taking care of her girls,[1] for everywhere abduction was common, especially at Genoa.[2] In country districts there was, perhaps, even more danger, but the women of the peasantry as well as those of the lower classes in towns had to work for a living, and consequently enjoyed more freedom than their wealthier sisters. Many sensual ballads of the peasantry show how freedom

[1] *Umberto Marchesini*, Nozze Zini-Cremoncini.

[2] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., p. 12.

was employed[1] by a class with whom the loosest forms of civil marriage lingered. Among the poor, as in the Early Middle Ages, marriage was hardly deemed necessary, since, in the lower orders of society, questions of inheritance and political influence did not demand a severely legalized alliance. There is evidence that young girls of those classes cannot be convicted of upholding any severe measure for chastity before marriage, though they became fairly faithful wives, while those unable to form a stable union fled to the convent-roof or became "filles de joie".[2]

In spite of restrictions, there was a great deal of coquetry. In the thirteenth century we read how a lady goes to spin at the window, a lover passes and she turns round; the hand is retained; the wool gets into a tangle; all must be done over again.[3] In the early part of the fifteenth century, St. Bernardino accuses women of being addicted to flirtation. Perhaps the reason why abduction was so rife in Genoa was that the ladies there were far from discreet. In the fifteenth century Genoese matrons and their daughters were fond of sitting at their balconies and exchanging badinage and tender words with their swains or throwing down fruits and flowers to them.[4] Probably they caught French manners through political and commercial relations with that country; moreover they were Ligurians by race and had

[1] *R. Renier*, Miscellanea Nuziale Rossi-Teiss, Trento, 1897, pp. 14, 15.

[2] *A. de Gubernatis*, La poésie amoureuse de la renaissance italienne, 1907, pp. 32-55.

[3] *Barberino*, Documento d'Amore.

[4] *Muratori*, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, XIV, 1016-7.

Ligurian neighbours, and became infected with Provençal mirth. Giambattista of Udine tells us that Genoese ladies had better manners than could be found in other cities, and that they would be considered religious and chaste if they could be deprived of their lovers. It seems that they were fond of merry-making at places of public entertainment and disinclined to go home until a very late hour: the authorities vainly tried to put down gatherings at night in vaults and *loggie*, which were selected for their coolness in the hot season, deeming them as baited hooks for youth and innocence. The city was famous for its serenades, and, in the sixteenth century, Bandello makes one of his characters, a Genoese, say: "It is the custom in my country, when a young man in love happens to meet his lady anywhere, for him to have a bunch of flowers in his hand—jasmine or lemon or orange or whatever may be in season,—and straightway he will give them. Then she will pluck what flowers she may be wearing on her bosom and give them to her *intendio*" (the word is used by Boccaccio). A lover would give as much as a ducat for a flower out of season. During the Catholic Reaction, Francesco Bosio, apostolic visitor at Genoa, wrote to the signory entreating them to curb the excessive liberty of women, concerning which a law "was published, as I hear, last year to prohibit those frolics at night (*veglie*) which lead to a thousand disorders and sins". Yet, at church, the most decorous manners were observed, the men sitting to the right, the women to the left of the altar.[1]

[1] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., p. 50.

Still, church was the accepted covert for a woman to wait in ambush, make eyes and display her charms: it was a chosen place for the burgher's wife to meet her lover when, as appears to have frequently happened in the thirteenth century, she took advantage of the absence of her spouse or wished to revenge herself on him for his infidelities. In spite of escort amorous swains would follow dames and maidens home and pass and repass their door; they would employ some hawker of feminine gewgaws to take a message; they would sing amorous songs by night to the accompaniment of a jew's harp, trick out their servants and horses with their ladies' colours, avail themselves of the power of love-charms and sorcery, and exhaust their fortune in giving feasts and tournaments to the fair.[1] Under the cover of the courtly service of love a good deal of flirtation and also of intrigue went on. When Caterina, ex-queen of Cyprus, held her court at Asolo, cardinals, warriors, and poets hung about her twelve damsels; among them, once a fortnight, was to be found Pandolfo Malatesta of Rimini, spruce and finely dressed; that warrior cast sheep's eyes at the royal widow, but it was suspected that the real object of his visits was Fiammetta, one of the ladies of the bed-chamber.[2] It is sad to learn that, during the Renaissance, the ladies of Venzone are "pitiful and yield to the warm prayers of their lovers,"[3] and that "the ladies of Milan enjoy such pleasures and have such household comfort that they are usually affable,

[1] Cento novelle, v. n. 3; viii. n. 4; *Boccaccio*, ix. 5; *Il pecorone*, iii. n. 2.

[2] *P. Bembo*, Degli Asolani, lib. I.

[3] Delle belle donne di Venzone.

pleasing and inclined to give and receive love and live amorously".[1]

The novelists and comic writers give the impression that love meant to the Italian the gratification of sensual passion by means of audacity, knavery, treachery and the shabbiest bad-faith. But the novelists exaggerated the worst features of their times; partly because brains told in the fierce struggle for existence, and men went under, not because of their wickedness but of their stupidity; whereby much sympathetic admiration was yielded to an intrigue carried on so cleverly as to become a work of art; secondly, because, like Sir Robert Walpole, they knew what would be quite intelligible and furnish amusement to every one. The betrayed husband plays the part of the pantaloon in a pantomime; he is made a jolterhead to excite laughter. The clever way in which he is circumvented appealed to a generation which only achieved and maintained position, or safety even, by finesse and dodge. Yet the very men who wrote so shamelessly glorified spiritual love. Both kinds of passion, the sensual and the immaterial are strong with the breath of life, and often they dwell together in the same breast. Owing to the perfunctory character of the marriage tie, intellectual, refined women had usually small scruple in yielding themselves to an ardent lover. The platonic servitors of love balanced themselves on the edge of peril. Even cold Artemis loosened her maiden girdle to a mortal lover, and Endymion, forgetting the reverence due to a goddess, surrendered to her charm.

In the thirteenth century Angiolieri Cechi struck

[1] *Bandello*, I, n. 9.

some singularly modern chords. The son of an "unco guid" father and a bigoted mother, he was wildly rebellious. Married to an ugly old woman, he fell in love with a beautiful jade who was the daughter of an "ass of a shoemaker". She tormented him sadly and thereby kept him in hand :—

> "When I behold Becchina in a rage
> Just like a little lad I trembling stand
> Whose master tells him to hold out his hand."[1]

There is nothing of the chivalrous service of love about this, but how far removed the spirit of it is from classical sentiment! Yet, when we come across pure lofty passion it is not quite modern—at least it is not quite the passion of the northern races: it is quick, impulsive, sensuous, intense. It is the author's conviction that no one ever portrayed the perfervid southern temperament so truly and powerfully as our own Shakespeare. The quick hot blood that bounded through the veins of Juliet and Romeo leaps to a passion that is Italian love at its purest and best; it is love for the sake of love; a moment of high emotion is worth the world and life. A tale of the fourteenth century reveals the undercurrent of romantic feeling that lay below frigid social restraints. Ginevra degl' Amieri, of an aristocratic wealthy Ghibelline family was beloved by Antonio Rondinelli, a poor plebeian and a Guelph, and returned his affection. But she was given in marriage to Francesco d' Agolanti. Plague came and Ginevra sickened of it and was buried for dead. But slowly life fluttered back, and she awoke from her trance to find herself in a charnel-house. She called to her women, but only the echoes of her

[1] *D. G. Rossetti*, Early Italian Poets, 1892.

own voice answered her. Somehow she got free from the vault, and struggled in her shroud to her own door and called to her husband. He heard her and opened the window, and, thinking he saw a spirit, was mortally afraid, and, saying he would pay for masses for its repose, shut the window. Then Ginevra crept slowly to her father's house, where her mother sat weeping by the fireside. And her parents, too, thought they saw a ghost, and bidding her go in peace, shut the door. Then she dragged herself to a beloved uncle and met with the same greeting. Summoning what little strength was left in her wasted body, she betook herself to her lover. But he knew her voice and threw the door wide open and carried her, unconscious and almost frozen, indoors—for it was the depth of winter ; and he called to the women of the house, who fought with Death for her and revived her. But Antonio resolved never to let her go, and carried his plea into the bishop's court and won his lady.

In 1321 we find a Spaniard beheaded at Bologna for trying to elope with a maiden, and the all-powerful Romeo de' Pepoli getting into discredit because he desired that the offender should live.[1] In 1337, while service was going on at the church of Santa Maria at Gemona, up rose a brave woman and begged to be heard. Permission being granted, she stated that a Florentine was accused by the lord of Udine of having violated her : "So far is this from being true, all has happened of my own free will and consent, and, if he had not so acted, so much do I love him that I should yield myself to him on the earliest opportunity and hold him sinless before God and the world".

[1] *Salimbene*, Chronica Parmensis, Parmae, 1857.

And she insisted on what she had said being put down in writing.[1] In the fifteenth century a Jewess of Friuli demanded to be baptized in order that a youth whom she loved might be able to marry her.[2] Many of Masuccio's novels of the same century are stories of youthful lovers whom seas may separate but cannot estrange.

The wrath of Pandolfo, a defeated lover who flourished at the end of the fifteenth century, is characteristic of lawless Romagna, where weak princelets were unable to secure strong government. The brutalities characteristic of the petty governments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries lingered on in that district under ancient conditions. The father of a maiden shut her up in a convent to save her from Pandolfo Malatesta the wooer of Asolo, of whom we have spoken, a man of polish, a fratricide and a ruffian; whereupon he hurled defiance around, burned the convent and other buildings, and did all the violence he could.[3] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola furnishes us with an unexpected example of lawless, reckless love-making by a philosopher and scholar of a far more civilized State. Son of the lord of Mirandola, cousin-german to Count Boiardo the poet, Pico was famous for his knowledge of Hebrew and the classics; it was he who set the intellectual world aflame by his brilliant attempt to reconcile Christianity with Plato and the Kabbala. The archives at Modena contain a letter written May, 1448, by Guidoni, the Ferrarese envoy at Florence, to Duke Ercole. Pico was now in his twenty-third year. "The Count Giovanni

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 209. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[3] *Malipiero*, Ann. Vet. Archiv. stor., vii. i. pp. 489 sqq.

della Mirandola," it runs, "has been living for two years in such splendour and in the enjoyment of such universal esteem as has hardly fallen to the lot of anyone before in the city. A few days ago, he gave out that he was going to Rome, and he sent all his luggage forward. On his reaching Arezzo, where resided a lady with whom he had a love affair—the beautiful wife of one Giuliano de' Medici, engaged in the administration of taxes there—the said lady, according to previous agreement, left her husband's house. She pretended to be going for a walk, but just outside the town she mounted behind the count. He had about twenty people with him, some on horseback, some on foot, besides two mounted bowmen. When the people saw the lady surrounded by this troop, there was an uproar. The storm-bell was rung, and the count was followed in a pursuit which became so hot that he was obliged to give up his purpose. Every one of his suite that could be got at was killed and stripped in the mêlée, and many of the citizens also were left dead. Thanks to their good horses the count and his chancellor got away to Marciano, in the valley of the Chiana, where they were arrested. The Ten, before whom the case was laid, at first gave orders to liberate the count, but afterwards commanded both men to be kept under arrest. Probably he will get off scot-free, but the chancellor, on whom the chief blame is laid, may come off badly, the more so that the affair concerns the wife of a Medici—a poor man, it is true, but still one of the family. Truly the count's misadventure is greatly to be regretted for he used to be held up for saint as well as scholar; though indeed, love has caused many to blunder in a

similar way." The lady vowed that she had been kidnapped, and a credulous or politic husband took her back. Pico was wise : he did not attempt to defend himself : "I am guilty," he said, "and I am heartily sorry for it". He was young, clever, and of noble birth, so everybody excused him. "Man is weak ; love is mighty," said the Florentines. So he was set free.

In the early part of the sixteenth century Ludovico di Neri Capponi of Florence, a high spirited lad of sixteen, excellent at arms and games, and a fine dancer withal, made love to the wife of Mattineo Soderini, and having insulted the husband in church, found it prudent to withdraw to Rome, where he passed his time in the company of young bloods like himself. When he was able to return to Florence, he came across a young maiden, Maddalena Vellori, and they fell desperately in love with one another. Her mother, a widow, had wedded Piero Salviato, an old friend of her first husband, one who had only entered into the bond to profit by her wealth ; and the pair had affianced Maddalena to the stepfather's son by a former marriage. But this youth got involved in the Strozzi conspiracy and was executed (1554). Salviato now desired to marry Maddalena to another of his sons named Jacopo, and used the favour in which he stood with Duke Cosimo to this end. But the rank, wealth and beauty of the girl made the duke very suspicious of Salviato's motives ; so he resolved to reward one of his henchmen, Count Sigismondo de' Rossi, with Maddalena's hand. But there were many suitors. Now Maddalena was bent on having Ludovico for her husband, and sought for the aid of her mother,

whom she induced to write to the duke, thanking him for the interest he had manifested, but protesting that she, the mother, was quite content to make a less illustrious marriage than His Highness proposed, and, since her daughter was a young lady of firm will, she was undesirous of opposing Maddalena in her intention of *choosing her own spouse* (*eleggersi lo sposo a proprio talento*). The girl, who was seven years younger than Ludovico, was prudently removed to the convent where she had been educated. As Ludovico was passing along a piazza a maternal uncle stopped him and told him that the duke was bent on giving Maddalena to his favourite ; whereat Ludovico made some haughty remark, and at once sought out the duke, and told him that both mother and daughter had fully made up their minds. The duke replied, "At present, I say neither yes nor no. I must learn more about the matter." He sent one of his courtiers to interview Maddalena, and this emissary, who would appear to have been struck by the grace of the maiden and the firm resolve she manifested, told the duke precisely what his impressions were. All this became public talk. The duke, fearing that something reckless and unpardonable might be done, issued an order that Maddalena was not to be married without his consent. He then commanded the mother to deliver up Maddalena, and she brought the girl from the convent to the court. Both came very unwillingly, for they rightly suspected that Maddalena would be detained. The duchess received the pair very graciously, kissing them both, and kept the conversation to general topics, but, directly her mother withdrew, Maddalena cast herself on her knees before Her Highness and declared that

she had vowed herself to Ludovico and he had reciprocated the vow, and she would perish rather than wed another. This she said so sweetly, yet with so much genuine emotion, that the duchess was moved. But Maddalena was kept at court for some days, seeing no one but entirely trustworthy ladies of the court, and unable to communicate with the external world. Then, having been proved, she was given an audience by the duke's daughter, who assured her that the duke would never force her to wed against her will. And the duke sent word to Ludovico to put his house in order, since he was to receive his bride forthwith.[1]

Such a tale of true love and the happy termination of its struggle with authority would have been almost inconceivable in Dante's time. But probably romantic love was more common and had more potent consequences throughout our whole period than might appear. There is evidence that many a man and maid turned monk and nun out of hopeless passion. Savonarola, when a lad of twenty, dwelling in his father's house at Ferrara, fell in love with the illegitimate daughter of Roberto Strozzi, who lived next door. His youthful passion so wrought on him that he contrived to declare it to the maiden, who told him that no Strozzi would ever stoop to an alliance with a Savonarola. Had the answer been different, haply the sombre figure of that half-sighted man of genius would never have appeared on the great stage of history.

[1] *G. E. Saltini*, Tragedie medicee domestiche, Firenze, 1898, pp. 8-31.

CHAPTER VI

THE WOMAN AT HOME: THE HOUSE

WHAT kind of a home would the young bride be taken to? In the thirteenth century a maiden of rank would ride to some grim fortress, perched like an aerie high up on a mountain-spur. She would be admitted through a massive gateway, cross a courtyard with a well at its centre, and enter a great low hall, furnished with a huge table and benches covered with coarse cloth; if it were winter enormous logs would be a-blazing in the open fireplace; if night, torches would flame in their cressets and fill the room with smoke; the table might, if the castle belonged to a wealthy noble, be set with a few silver-gilt utensils holding painted candles, and there might be a few beakers of precious metal. Narrow deep-set windows would be closed with oiled linen to keep out rain and draught, and, by day a doubtful light would strive to penetrate the room. Around, storied arras would tell of Arthur and his round-table or of the great fight at Roncesvalles, or there might be strange tapestries brought from Egypt.[1] Baked meats would be pushed through holes in the wall from the adjoining kitchen at meal times. She would pass up a narrow staircase to her bedroom,

[1] *Belgrano*, loc. cit., p. 57.

but, after she had settled down in her new home, she and her husband would occupy separate rooms, yet neither would sleep alone; each would have a servant to bed-fellow.[1] She would be shown a herb-room, for her use only, full of herbs and conserves and domestic remedies; for every lady was expected to be able to nurse and physic the sick, brew simples, set fractures and dress a wound with balsam; there would be peppermint, turpentine, poppy-capsules, quassia, cinnamon, hops, honey and sulphur there, ready to her hand, as well as the powdered lung of a fox, properly dried after washing it with wine, which was good for a cough, if taken beaten up in the yolk of an egg; and other strange medicaments besides.

As early as 1250 we find a Genoese artist employed in that city to paint the walls of a room with red roses on a white ground and white roses on a red ground—a mode of adornment probably copied from those mural paintings of Roman villas which still remain so fresh.[2] Art, however, only began to be generally employed in the decoration of the home in the fifteenth century, and, for long, masterpieces were only to be found in churches and public buildings; bare spaces on the walls were sometimes covered with neatly written quotations and mottoes;[3] the hall, however, was by that time adorned with arabesques or frescoes. By the end of the century the castle would have been modernized or rebuilt; part of the year was always spent in the city, and the country castle was only used

[1] See *Cibrario*, Econ. Pol. and *G. Giacosa*, Vita it. nel rinasc., La vita privata ne'i castelli.

[2] *Belgrano*, loc cit., p. 46.

[3] *Æneas Silvius*, de vir clar. xxii.; *Pii II*, comment. p. 181.

in *villegiatura*, except in Piedmont, where the nobility despised town-life. Feudal days were over and retainers no longer lodged in the castle, which was, therefore, of very modest dimensions. The rude furniture of former times had given way to things of great elegance but not a whit more comfortable. Two noble staircases (one of them might be of graceful snail-shell design) would lead to spacious upper chambers, where a bride would find great chests of drawers set against the walls, and an arm-chair beside a great bed tricked out with new curtains and smothered with flowers in her honour; and here she would see that her wedding-chest, filled with her rich dresses, was properly placed. Still a citadel without, the home of the wealthy noble or merchant was becoming a palace of art within. Citizens felt proud of the gorgeous private houses that were arising in their midst. "I took up Guarnieri in my arms," writes Tribaldo dei Rossi (1489), "and told him to look down, and gave him a coin with a lily to throw down and a bunch of damask roses that I held. The children were brought by our servant Rita, and Guarnieri, who was four years old that very day, had on a new cloak made by Nannina (his mother) of shot-green and yellow silk." Guarnieri was taken to see the laying of the corner-stone of the Strozzi palace at Florence.

Crowds of servants replaced the feudal retainers. Renée of Ferrara had, of her own separate household in 1529, four secretaries, a chief lady and seven maids of honour, an almoner, two choristers, six maids of the bedchamber, six equerries, doctors and, altogether, about 200 attendants and servants.[1] The greatest

[1] *E. Rodocanachi*, Renée de France, pp. 58, 59.

artists were employed in painting the walls in fresco, in designing furniture and in modelling pieces of plate. In the sixteenth century Michelangelo did not disdain to bestow his genius on a salt-cellar nor Raphael and his school on domestic pottery.

Need we describe the noble elevation of the palaces that arose during the Renaissance; how powerful yet how light they looked; or the glowing harmony of delicate colour set off by gold, within doors, every room different from all the others, and full of invention? The furniture, never too crowded, was nobly carved, the sideboards supported plate exquisitely graven; elegant lamps hung from the ceiling or sprang in beautiful curves from the walls; priceless books were gathered together in the library. There were great shining copper vessels to cool the wines; musical instruments lay about; there was profusion of glass and majolica and, here and there, quiet altars of delicate workmanship. Lace was used for the adornment of wondrous bedsteads before it became an article of personal dress. Great importance was attached to the occupation of a bed as splendid as it was unwholesome and funereally solemn. When Giovanni Andrea d' Oria received the Duchess of Loreno in 1579, he provided for her use an elaborately carved bed, adorned with the richest gold fringe.[1] From the end of the fifteenth century leather hangings were often used instead of arras and tapestries; they were originally an Italian product, though Spaniards and French learned the art of making them.[2] Great

[1] *Merli e Belgrano*, Il palazzo d' Oria, p. 55.

[2] *L. T. Belgrano*, op. cit. p. 77.

ladies sat on uncomfortable sofas or great stiff chairs with armorial bearings and a shelter for the head.

Up to the sixteenth century and even beyond it the Roman palace remained gloomy and plain; great steps led up to it; stone floors and whitewashed walls and plain, scanty furniture were all one found within. There was the inevitable shrine, with a lamp burning before a picture of our Lady; and, on festal occasions, an antique or two and some silver plate would be dragged forth. Here the Roman lady lived in almost Oriental seclusion.

But the Venetian palaces! Sansovino, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, says he cannot describe the incredible richness of their interiors.[1] Il Franco, writing in 1610, says: "The buildings of this marvellous city arrest the eyes of them that admire it from without. But, seen within, one is dumbfounded and amazed at the abundance of beautiful pictures, sculptures, ornaments, tapestries, gold, silver and other precious adornments, so that, should I attempt to recount it, I should seem a liar to all that have not seen with their own eyes."[2] Yet we must not be misled. Could we avail ourselves of a "time-machine" and, travelling backwards, see "with our own eyes," we should undoubtedly be "dumbfounded and amazed" at the strange contrasts of splendour with shabbiness, of luxury with discomfort. The spouse of Niccolo III of Ferrara had a grand bedstead hung with arras, but the mattress on which she slept was covered with coarse cloth; Borso d' Este slept on a straw bed, and

[1] *F. Sansovino*, Venetia descritta, con aggiunta da *G. Martinioni*, 4o, Venet. 1663.

[2] *Franco*, Habiti.

the daughters of Parisina lay covered by an old tattered counterpane ; the ordinary meals of this family were served in pewter dishes ; we read of parrot-cages and mirrors and ivory combs, of perfumes and tooth-powders, of how the knights and ladies of Ferrara arrayed themselves in silk and gold, and of the magnificent uniform of the pages, yet these resplendent youths were provided with but one copper basin for their washing, but one brush for their fine clothes (which had to last until they were in holes and quite worn out), and but one wooden comb for the long, flowing locks of all of them.[1] Ostentation was relieved by tatters and dirty faces and hands! The marchioness attired her daughters in the plainest clothes, and cut up her old dresses for their fine attire.[2] The sanitary arrangements of the palace of the Sforza at Milan, at the end of the fifteenth century, were no less horrible than those of a Spanish railway station to-day ; the audience-chamber became a bedroom at night, and a truckle-bed was run into it ; the windows were closed with oiled linen, rent and torn and only renewed when some distinguished guest was expected. Yet Galeazzo Maria ordered the ceiling of the hall to be covered with red velvet and the falconry to be set out with green velvet. Instructions were given that there should always be good bread and wine ready for the family, lest the store of other things should run short (the common people ate millet) ; the ends of a torch were to be brought back before a

[1] It is noteworthy that Alberti, in a letter to Paola Codagnello, perceives and complains of the disregard of personal cleanliness in his time.

[2] *L. A. Gandini*, Atti e mem. del R. deput. per le provincie di Romagna, ix. p. 153 sqq.

fresh one was granted, and the tapestries of prominent citizens were borrowed for festal occasions.[1] Tasso might enjoy the beautiful gardens attached to Cardinal Ippolito's palace at Tivoli,[2] the water-organs and the fountains that played practical jokes on the unwary, but at home Cardinal Luigi only provided him with a wooden bedstead, two mattresses, one of them being of straw, two sheets, one coverlet, a straw-bottomed chair, one other chair of a better sort and a table.

What of the home of the citizen? What kind of dwelling did Dante and his wife inhabit? A small, low, mean building, of stone in their case, but oftener of wood, facing a narrow, tortuous lane, as yet unpaved, as filthy and malodorous as that of some neglected Oriental town, dusty in summer, a foul torrent in the winter-rains.[3] Next door, on either side, and all around were the lowly homes, mean, fetid and squalid, of other members of the family, and, protecting them all, arose the lofty family tower—the place of refuge from fire, tumult and assault. Over the doorway there would, perhaps, be an image or fresco of St. Christopher bearing the Infant Christ; for that patron protected one from pestilence, famine and fire. There were two or three rooms on the ground floor, and, if the merchant did not do his business in a booth in the

[1] *Luca Beltrami*, La vita nel castello di Milano al tempo degli Sforza, 1900, p. 23.

[2] Gardens were added to some palaces in the fifteenth century. Sometimes, as in the Medicean Villa Careggi, they illustrated the botanical lore of the period.

[3] *Sacchetti*, nov. 17.

THE BATH IN THE REAR-YARD OF THE DWELLING

DETAIL FROM "DER URIASBRIEF" AT DRESDEN. BY FRANCIABIGIO (1482-1525)

street, one of them would be a shop—a cool and comfortable cave, such as one sees in the back streets of Rome to-day or, in ruins, on the Palatine. Yet, even now, there was some feeling for simple grace in domestic architecture, as may be seen in the wooden colonnade of Casa Isolano, still standing at Bologna. Giovanni de' Mussi, writing in 1388, says that in 1320 a cooking-fire was made in the room and everybody stood around it for warmth in winter, and, in 1368, the same style still obtained at Rome. Heywood thinks that fireplaces did not come into general use for a long time.[1] The rain and wind beat in at the windows and through the ill-fitting doors. Folgore speaks of the profusion of logs and Eastern carpets, but he refers to the houses of the nobility of Siena only and uses a poet's licence. One of the rooms opened on to a small courtyard, and here the lady of the house took an occasional bath, as may be seen set forth in more than one picture of Bathsheba. (Barberino recommended a moderate amount of washing for ladies, to keep the skin youthful.) Neighbours' pigs and poultry were frequent invaders of the lower rooms, and there was plenty of occupation and excitement in getting them out again.[2] If the house had more than one story, a steep, narrow staircase led to chambers which, being securer, were provided with wider apertures than the rooms below. They were supplied with wooden shutters and oiled linen or parchment windows, which were removable if you wanted air; nor was glass generally used before the sixteenth century. Here the ladies dressed in summer, regardless of onlookers; "the lady could not move

[1] *W. Heywood*, Ensamples, p. 53. [2] *Sacchetti*, nov. 110.

about her room," says an author of a later period, "but he saw her from one of his windows which faced hers, and often, in summer, he saw her naked, getting up from her bed".[1] The bedroom had a high bed with a stool for mounting it, a table, a box and the wedding-chest. Even in the twelfth century very rich people might have tapestries hung on the walls, and most houses would possess the images of saints, modern representatives of the *lares* of old.

The furniture of an English labourer's cottage to-day is not artistic, it is true, but the humble home of any British peasant is well stocked and luxurious compared with the mansion of the well-to-do burgher of Italy in the thirteenth century. A certain house at Bologna, in 1285, contained only a coffer of walnut wood, a copper pot, a winepress, a vessel for wine, a quilt, a bolster, two sheets, and an alcove-bed ; the owner had also four baskets of beans, nine sheep and lambs, two goats and four baskets of corn.[2] In 1297 an inventory of the entire effects of one Gabo, a defaulting merchant, was presented to a Sienese court by a certain Mabellino Martele, his creditor, who held a bill of sale. There are enumerated a barrel, a frying-pan, three wine flasks, an iron tripod, a deep cooking pot, three bowls, a dish, two measures, two baskets, a pan for carrying bread from the bakery, four knives, three daggers, a shield, a staff, a bow, an agricultural implement, a chequer-board, two chests for papers, nine mattresses, eight chairs, a box, a shaggy woollen cloth, two linen cloths, two feather quilts, two straw beds with tripods and seats (the tripod for mounting into bed is used to-day by peasants), seven straw

[1] *Il pecorone*, G. II, nov. 2. [2] *L. Frati*, loc. cit., p. 20.

beds, six pairs of tripods, three bolsters, one pair of linen sheets and a *tota volliolam*, whatever that may mean.[1] A Genoese inventory of 1312 mentions a skin-coverlet, four cushions and sixteen sheets, an extraordinary number for the time; but in 1389, we come across silk embroidered pillows and an embroidered cloth counterpane with a triple fringe of silk and gold. Country folk occupied very close quarters. We find a country girl sleeping with her father (a small innkeeper), mother, two male guests and a baby in a little room with scarcely room to move between the beds, the guests sleeping together in that bed which was "the least bad and incommodious".[2]

The rapid increase of wealth was accompanied by a rising standard of comfort and luxury, especially when feuds became less frequent and fierce, and the danger of losing one's goods by exile or arson diminished. In the fifteenth century we find L. B. Alberti complaining that the furnishing of one room cost as much as that of a whole house aforetime, and that artisans take their meals at home and not at the workshop. A long inventory of the furniture of Maestro Bartalo di Tura, a Sienese physician of repute in the fifteenth century, gives us for kitchen-ware a pair of gridirons with rackets, a stamp for marking things belonging to the house, a pair of mustard grinders, three pictures, two small cups of pewter, two pewter shapes, a salt-box somewhat worn, a small table with wooden legs and

[1] *L. Zdekauer*, Boll. sen., V, 186. The term *tota volliolam* recurs frequently in inventories of humble homes even, but the learned Professor Zdekauer, in a kind reply to my request for enlightenment, informs me that he has not yet discovered its meaning.

[2] *Boccaccio*, ix. 6.

iron pillar, a safe for salted meat, etc.[1] The other rooms were no less liberally furnished. Sometimes houses were rented: Masuccio, the novelist, who lived with his mother and sisters, paid ten florins; Donatello, the artist, fifteen florins, and Baccio Pontelli eight florins a year for their abodes.

As over every other form of expenditure, sumptuary laws were perpetually being passed to restrict luxury. Thus in 1476 we find a Venetian edict limiting the value of bedroom magnificence to 150 ducats. But the rate of expenditure continued to increase right through our period, though in the fifteenth century, in parts remote from the centre of trade, and especially where there were feeble governments, the home still maintained a feudal aspect. We find that the houses of the Attendoli of Romagna had shields and armour hanging on the walls, and wide beds, without coverlets, whereon slept troops of armed horsemen, who all feasted together on coarse viands served in a disorderly style.[2]

[1] *C. Mazzi*, La casa di M. B. di Tura, Boll. sen., III, 168-9.

[2] *Zazzera*, Della nobilità d'Italia (della famiglia Sforza).

A VENETIAN BEDROOM. "THE VISION OF S. URSULA"
V. CARPACCIO (1450?-1522?)
Accademia, Venice

CHAPTER VII

THE WOMAN AT HOME: THE HOUSEWIFE; SERVANTS AND SLAVES

THE feudal lady dwelt in a castle of little space, for everything had to be sacrificed to defence, and the palaces of the High Renaissance, even though they were architectural gems, retained this feudal character, for they were quite small, and if there were a large number of guests, lodgings were found for them in inns or at some neighbouring monastery. The baron's wife was awakened at daybreak by the blowing of a horn; she looked through the deep, narrow slits of her room on the first floor down on the courtyard, full of stir and bustle; hounds were baying and stable-boys bringing out the horses for the hunt. Whilst her husband might be indulging in the luxury of a bath, a habit copied from the accursed paynim by the crusaders, she would don her clothes and bandage her legs, for stockings had not come in; there was nothing to doff, for night-dresses were unknown; her under-garments, scanty and often stale, were made of coarse linen, and she would put on a sober gown more fitted for use than adornment, since silk and brocades cost a fortune and were reserved for great occasions. Then she would go to the little oratory adjoining the bedchamber and pray, or descend to the chapel to hear mass, and thence proceed

to the kitchen, where, as likely as not, she would lose her temper and box the cook's ears. At breakfast and dinner, the two meals of the day, she would wash her hands with rose-water, and prolong the repast as much as possible to lessen the tedium of dull hours. If it were washing-day, she and her daughters would help in hanging out the clothes, or she might join her boisterous spouse in his sport, setting forth on horseback, falcon on wrist. In the evening she sang or toyed with some musical instrument or played at chequers or some simpler game. (Cards were not introduced until A.D. 1330 and were not much in use before the next century.) If educated, she would rejoice in French tales of the gentle passion—a dangerous pastime, for daily life was very dull, and these romances suggested that perilous if piquant pastime, the excitement of amorous intrigue.[1]

Later on, in more settled and luxurious days, the high-born dame devoted the hours to a passionate pursuit of pleasure. But a few highly instructed women loved to sit in their private apartments, working at the tambour-frame while some poet read his latest verses to them, though most days were filled up with joust and tourney, water-parties and the chase. And there were fascinating debates to listen to, either in the lady's own palace or at the meeting place of some "Academy," on the never-failing subject of love. The evening would be devoted to the singing of solos or madrigals, to scartino or some other obsolete game at cards, or to seeing some classical comedy or modern play. Ardent in pleasure, impatient of repose, she abandoned herself to the intoxication of excitement.

[1] *Giascosa*, loc. cit.; *Cibrario*, loc. cit.

But if her husband were away from home she acted as his vicar and attended closely to matters of state. Yet, whatever the claims of duty or enjoyment might be, she never neglected her obligations as a careful housewife. Small economies had to be made to meet great expenses. At the court of Ludovico Sforza, says a contemporary, "everything is weighed—the hay, the butter, the cheese".[1] Most great ladies still went daily into the kitchen, saw that the pots and pans were bright, looked after the viands and measured out the servants' wine. The ill-fated Parisina, Marchioness of Este, went herself to the second-hand clothes market, bought old linen and table-napkins and carefully scrutinized accounts.[2] The herb-room was visited and the making of conserves and washes occupied leisure moments no less than the exhibition of accomplishments. Caterina Sforza was a notable housekeeper and made a large collection of recipes;[3] Battista, Duchess of Urbino, supervised her maids of honour while they kneaded the bread and churned the butter. Marco Cornaro, whose election as doge was opposed on the ground that he had married a plebeian wife, whose relatives might become acquainted with secrets of state, made a speech in defence of his spouse and her family and drew attention to his clothes, which looked very well but were relined and altered by that lady. It is true that Cornaro reigned before

[1] *R. Gaguin*, Chronique, etc.

[2] *L. A. Gandini*, Usi e costumi della corte di Ferrara, Atti e mem. della R. deput. per le provincie di Romagna, ix. 153 sqq.

[3] *Pasolini Dall' Onda*, Caterina Sforza, Roma, 1893, t. 3, Appendice.

the true Renaissance began, but these thrifty habits were maintained, even in Venice.[1]

The citizen's wife took entire charge of the house, and it was deemed unmanly for the husband to poke his nose into every corner; she devoted Saturday to washing herself and the children and cleaning the house—a very necessary proceeding, for even in the fourteenth century we learn from the novelists that scraps from the plates and garbage were thrown under the bed. She plied the distaff, cooked the meals, and served at table.[2] When her husband was away she slept with her maid-servant, if she had one, both for safety and reputation, and a dog, or still better, a goose, guarded the house at night. Very often she had not a house of her own, but dwelt with her father-in-law; this was considered to be a safeguard in every way; the entire family were at hand to repel attack and it rendered moral indiscretion more difficult. If she had a house of her own, all her neighbours were relatives of her husband, and it was impossible to move to another quarter without the express sanction of the authorities. Ser Pace da Certaldo, writing in the fourteenth century, advised citizens to keep a good stout rope for escape from the window and large sacks for removing the furniture in case of fire; for the thatched roofs and oiled linen windows were often set ablaze by unfriendly families, and the government itself sometimes set the houses of the opposition on fire and paid for what damage might be done thereby to their own adherents. In the thirteenth century a single family, the Cavalcanti of Florence, of whom

[1] *P. G. Molmenti*, La Dogaressa, cap. viii.

[2] *Boccaccio*, II, 9.

Dante's friend was a member, lost three towers, two palaces, an apothecary's shop and ten houses in a single one of these fires,[1] which probably burned down half Florence. From 1260 to 1266 incendiary Ghibellines destroyed property to the value of 130,000 lire.

The housewife prepared two meals a day—the *pranzo*, or mid-day meal, and the *cena*, or supper. Hands were washed both before and after eating, a habit copied from the Saracen, and grace was said before meals. Husband and wife ate out of the same plate in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries or out of half a loaf of bread, hollowed, if pewter were too expensive for them. Even wooden dishes were quite unknown in the earliest part of our period, and one or two drinking cups served for the whole family, a servant holding a torch during the evening meal in winter, if the family could afford to keep a servant.[2] Meat was carved with the dagger and eaten with the fingers in Dante's day, but, afterwards, table-knives came into common use, and by the sixteenth century the upper classes had learned how to manipulate the fork. Yet the very rich boasted gold and silver ewers, even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Manners in those times were incredibly rough. Fra Bonvicino urges (1290) the wiping of the mouth with the table-cloth after drinking, and that those who would be deemed well bred should not make a noise when they use the spoon in company, nor blow the nose without using a cloth, nor lick nor blow on the fingers, nor use them for cleaning out the ears during a repast, nor remark on the cooking of the food; also they will

[1] Delizie degli eruditi toscani, vii. 219 sqq.

[2] *Joh. de Mussis*, apud *Muratori*, R. I. S., xvi. 50 sqq.

wash the hands a little after the meal to take off the grease. Each diner drew his own knife from its sheath. Table-napkins came into fashion in the fourteenth century. Before that time the tablecloth was used instead. Even during the Renaissance the Archbishop of Benevento, a Florentine, denounces scratching oneself at table, "and if you have to spit you should do it in a polite way," though there are people of such self-control that they do not spit at all,[1] he tells us.

The butcher's shop was almost empty of meat until Saturday,[2] for Sunday was the day for a good dinner. The lower classes had pork and pudding [3] sometimes, and when a pig was killed the neighbours claimed a share of it.[4] Sweets were always an expensive luxury, but bread, vegetables and fruit were cheap, except in seasons of drought, and then, owing to the difficulty of transport, there was famine. In times of plenty great people kept a groaning table : in 1375 the board of Francesco Vecchio Carrara, lord of Padua, was furnished with a young steer, an ox, veal, capons, fowls, salted meat, cheese and lard,[5] but such profusion was only to be found among rich merchants on very important occasions and by special permission to infringe the sumptuary laws. Roast crane and tripe were considered to be great luxuries.[6] The housewife threw condiments into her dishes with lavish hand ; pepper and clove, cinnamon, mustard, cubebs, mace and ginger, brought from the East—one is re-

[1] *G. della Casa*, Il galateo. [2] *Sacchetti*, n. 160.
[3] *Ibid.*, n. 102. [4] *Ibid.*, n. 146.
[5] *G. Gennari*, Degli usi de' Padovani, 1800, p. 19.
[6] *Boccaccio*, vi. 4 ; *Sacchetti*, 98.

minded of Smollett's feast after the manner of the ancients. Beatrice d' Este wrote to her sister Isabella that she had planted a whole field of garlic to be ready for the seasoning of her favourite dishes, when she should pay her promised visit.

Among the better class, children were not to be found at their parents' table : they were away at nurse or with foster-parents in the country. It is quite exceptional to come across such a statement as that of Ottavio Galeotti, 20 September, 1598, who desires "all my children to be at table with me and my wife Maria".[1] If they were at home they wished their father and mother good day, and kissed their hands before sitting down.

The wealthy housewife had little to do with entertainment. Feasts, always on the largest scale permitted, were put into the hands of professional cooks. But the middle-class wife is told by Palmieri to look after things so as to have them perfect, and every girl, whatever her station in life might be, was taught how to cook. A favourite dish was peacock, served in all the glory of his tail ; another was galantine.[2] A fourteenth century chronicler tells us that the guests were first offered wines and sweetmeats ; then came capons, fowls, pheasants, partridges, hares, wild boars roebuck and other game in season (game was plentiful in those days). Tarts of curdled milk, sugared, and fruit followed. And after the washing of hands and before the tables were removed wine was again passed round ; then came comfits and again wine. At wedding feasts cheese, saffron, and other groceries were

[1] *Stiavelli*, Storia di Pescia, p. 110.

[2] *Cibrario*, Ec. Pol., ii. 70.

served.[1] All the evidence goes to show that Italian men and women of those days rejoiced in singularly strong heads and good sound digestions. Sometimes some starveling would sneak in, and a generous host would not dismiss him; nor was the classic parasite wanting.[2]

Men and women sat apart, but during the Renaissance ladies and gentlemen sat in couples; nor did the tablecloth reach the ground so as to serve for a table napkin, for serviettes were deemed indispensable in every home.[3]

Every attempt was made to restrict expenditure at these feasts. The number of dishes, their quality, and the number of guests, were limited by sumptuary edicts. A large volume would not suffice to set them forth. A few, selected at random, may be given. At Pistoja (1333), the quantity of meat is limited; at Perugia (1366), three dishes of meat are allowed; at Siena (1412), one boiled and one roast meat with game and salad may appear; at Genoa (1484), nothing is to be consumed at family feasts that has not been sanctioned by the delegates of Paolo Fregoso, the Doge. Disobedience was punishable by enormous fines, but there were so many ways of evading the edicts and so many exceptions had to be made that every law fell into desuetude almost as soon as it was passed, and was succeeded by an amendment. Music outside the house was prohibited at Pistoja (1333), and the sum to be expended on a feast was fixed; as, also, at Florence (1384). Yet in the fifteenth century we find, not only music and improvisation, but buffoons

[1] *Joh. de Mussis*, Chronicon placentinum, loc. cit.

[2] *Sacchetti*, nov. 51. [3] *Cibrario*, loc. cit., II, 730 sqq.

and actors amusing scores and even hundreds of guests assembled at profuse tables and indulging in prolonged repasts, served in gold and silver dishes of delightful workmanship.[1]

A lady who could cook was highly appreciated by her guests when they visited her at her country villa.[2] The letters of housewives show how capable and thrifty they were. "I have been extravagant," writes a married daughter to her father, "and ordered four legs, five pieces of bacon, and a little suet. I have bought a pig, which leaves me less money, for if one buys anything cheap it is worth nothing. To the magnificent and well-born king and lord, Antonio Bichi."[3] In two things were they lavish: in ostentatious personal display and in the use of perfumes to overpower the mingled odours of cesspool, stable, humanity and a thousand obscenities—even the harness of mules was strongly perfumed, and all kinds of objects, preserved in museums, still disseminate a powerful scent.

Much time was spent in prayer; and, since the road to church was none too safe nor always too clean, an oratory was to be found in the home of every well-to-do merchant. The distaff was industriously plied, and Cesare Vecellio, in dedicating a work to a noble Venetian lady at the end of the sixteenth century, praises her for receiving and employing virtuous young ladies in lace-work. Embroidery was a favourite

[1] *Sanuto*, loc. cit., xxvi. 19 and xxx. 173; *Cian*, Giorn. stor. dell. let. it., xlviii. 422; *Sansovino*, loc. cit., p. 270.

[2] *A. Pandolfini*, Del governo della famiglia, written about 1425.

[3] *L. Zdekauer*, Lettere volgari del rinascimento, Boll. sen., iv. 245-6.

occupation ; but, where a prince ruled, there was less money for finery, though it might be more needed, since monopolies of the fish-market, salt, fruit and vegetables rendered housekeeping expensive. The inclusion of the aristocracy within city-walls, and their intermarriage with wealthy plebeian families, introduced aristocratic tastes into the trading cities, and, with the advancement of learning, we have charming pictures of the life of cultivated ladies of Florence in the fifteenth century. Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the mother of Lorenzo de' Medici, though barely able to read the office of the Virgin, was a poetess ; she would pray for her sons before a picture of the Virgin, and took her leisure seated on her trousseau-box and chatting with lady visitors.[1] A generation later the merchant's wife vied with the princess in learning and accomplishments. In spite of their multifarious duties most women found much time for gossip and looking out of the window, and the good wife of the middle-class was much esteemed if she only talked with the servant, the laundress and the bakeress ;[2] while she found it hard to get her daughter married if the young lady were much in people's mouths.[3] That wife received high commendation who loved to remain indoors and rock the cradle.[4] In the fourteenth century the trader's wife was as stolid as a statue and silent before men, and these traits persisted ; but let a feast day come and she sat at the doorway, eating, tattling, and not infrequently brawling with her associates.[5]

[1] *Cesare Guasti*, Lettere di una gentildonna, Fir., 1877, p. viii.
[2] *Boccaccio*, I, n. 10.
[3] *Sacchetti*, nov. 16.
[4] *Dante*, Par., xv. 113, 114, 117, 12-13.
[5] *Boccaccio*, I. nov. 10.

She entered heartily into vendetta, and, if not of very exalted breeding, was not above pulling her neighbour's hair, scratching a friend's face, or speaking evil of some one she disliked. In the winter evening she liked to sit by the fire and tell and listen to tales. Her conversation with her husband was often unimproving; she spoke to him grossly and without reticence, and so would he speak of her to his male friends.[1] If her husband were away her nightly vigils were punctuated by the cry of the watchman or the snoring of the maid-servant at her side, or the more silent footfall of a lover.[2] If discovered in an intrigue, in the fourteenth century at least, she was well trounced and forgiven, or, very rarely, sent back to her father; for the morals of the middle ages still persisted. Indeed, members of her own family were sometimes willing to betray her for money or the mere love of the game.[3] But, on the whole, husbands trusted their wives implicitly, though they set them a bad example; and if a woman betrayed her husband she usually proved more faithful to her lover than did he to her. The housewife knew how to make her household obey her and how to keep her lord in order: "If you salute a lady-neighbour or praise another woman or come home late you will be suspected of having gone astray," writes Petrarch; "and you must render an account to the severest of judges, who will be awaiting you, seated on your bed". Ser Lapo Mazzei speaks of his wife as the severest of magistrates; Morelli advises his son not to let his wife play the husband, and Alessandra Macinghi tells her son it

[1] *Sacchetti*, nov. 54. [2] *Stiavelli*, loc. cit., p. 30.
[3] *Pii II* (*Æneas Silvius*), De Duobus Amantibus.

will not be well for him to get too fond of his wife, adding, "when a man is manly he makes his wife a woman".

Though the citizens married late, were often away, sometimes for months or even years at a time, and infant mortality was very great, families were large. Ser Lapo Mazzei married in 1376: in twenty-four years' time we find him with fourteen children, and others were born to him afterwards.[1] Twenty children and more were not uncommon in a family, but few of these grew up. The city was unhealthy, the accommodation in the house was cramped, and there was insufficient service, so the well-to-do put their children out to wet-nurses or foster-parents in the country. Where means were small and the family large the children could not be properly looked after and ran wild. The favourite pastime of boys was stone-throwing in the streets: Savonarola complained that they were allowed out at night and no questions were asked, though they were not permitted to attend his sermons. It was not always possible for an over-taxed wife and mother to come up to the standard of her time, which in the fifteenth century is thus set forth: "The duty proper to a wife is heedfully to govern the house well, provide for its wants, know all that is going on there, be watchful as to all that affects it, confer with her husband, ascertain his will and follow it in such wise that his command, opinion, and custom shall serve as her law".[2] But the housewife usually gets the highest credit from contemporaries. Bisticci, writing of Alessandra de' Bardi, says,

[1] *C. Guasti*, Ser Lapo Mazzei, Proemio, lxxiii.

[2] *Matteo Palmieri*, Vita civile.

" I have known Florentine women, even those of the highest birth, to be the first to rise in the house and go through it from cellar to granary, putting a hand to all that was doing ".

Even in the fourteenth century it was the habit of the trader to send his wife and family out of the hot fetid city during the summer heats, and escape himself when he could do so. The sense of the picturesque was so far developed in the fifteenth century that we find delight taken in some country house, half-hidden by the trees and covered with leafage, with weather-stained frescoes of the saints on the walls, a chapel and a river hard by, and a view whence the village priest could be seen ploughing his barren acre with borrowed oxen in the valley below.[1] So passionate was the desire of citizens to escape for a season from city-life that the poorest of them would contrive, by the most extraordinary means, to hire the room of some peasant, though a malodorous dunghill might be right before the door ;[2] in the middle of the fifteenth century they would go to a second-hand dealer and fritter the money they got from him away, either in the country or at the sea-side, cheek by jowl with their wealthier neighbours, who enjoyed this *villegiatura* in feasting and idling.[3] Usually, but not always, the holiday was taken in some place not far from the city, or at least in the state to which the citizen belonged, never in Romagna or districts where governments were feeble, vendetta reigned, plots were always afoot,

[1] *Tito Strozzi*, Poetae Erot., l. vi. fol. 183.

[2] *F. T. Perrens*, La civilization florentine, 1892.

[3] Carmen de varietate fortunae, *Muratori*, R. I. S., xiv. c. 8, 9.

insecurity and horror haunted the palace, and the shadow of murder lurked behind every door.[1]

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the habits of a citizen's household were very simple, and his wife usually dispensed with the luxury of a servant. Agnello of Pisa, who could afford to pay 30,000 florins for troops to capture the city for him, kept one young servant-girl only.[2] Ser Lapo Mazzei, the notary, had none, and his wife had to mend her boy's hose, even when she was not well.[3] In 1378 we find wealthy Francesco Rinuccini of Florence and his family of six sons, one daughter, three daughters-in-law and four grandsons—four families, therefore—dwelling under one roof, served by two maids, a wet nurse and a waiting maid, and a gardener, who lived out of the house with his wife and son ; there were eight horses to attend to also.[4] Francesco Datini, a rich man, kept a male servant, a female servant, a female slave and a girl-help, in 1383. Ten years later we find him provided with a female servant of fifty years, a female slave of twenty, a man and his wife, who have a child of six, and an old, blind, decrepit woman whom he keeps "for the love of God".[5] By the fifteenth century more servants were kept and, in the next century, many more. Princes and Princesses alike rejoiced in huge retinues and many dependants. Caterina Cornaro kept fifty servants, though possibly her maids-of-honour swept her rooms and emptied the slops, for

[1] *Cipolla*, Le signorie italiane, p. 649.

[2] See the Author's *Sismondi ;* recast and supplemented, p. 400 sqq.

[3] *Guasti*, loc. cit., lxxiv. [4] *C. Cantù*, loc. cit., 421.

[5] *Guasti*, Ser Lapo Mazzei, xliv.-xlv.

"some difficult folk of quality will have it no otherwise".[1]

Servants contracted to serve by the year. At Piacenza a servant received seven florins a year in 1388;[2] but in the sixteenth century wages were vastly increased; we find a water-seller in that century hiring a girl for eight years, at the expiration of which term she is to be paid thirty scudi, and found in board, lodging and clothes meanwhile. In 1296 a woman of Cividale agrees to serve a Florentine, dwelling at Trieste, "faithfully and well, neither robbing nor cheating nor committing adultery or fornication, under penalty of dismissal in her shift, with no other clothes or salary".[3] If servants broke their engagement they were fined, banished or otherwise punished. As late as 1515 a Florentine female servant, convicted of theft, had to choose between imprisonment for life or being driven out of the city, seated on a donkey, with a mitre on her head, and permanently exiled from the state. On the other hand servants were able to recover damages for unjust dismissal. The mistress might beat her servant, but not so as to cause a wound. "Be generous and kindly to your servants," is the advice of a fifteenth century moralist, "give them clothes and so forth when they are well-disposed and diligent; strive to be loved rather than feared, reproving them in speech; nonetheless they must be beaten sometimes, but not for every trifle."[4] The various governments tried to protect domestics from their employers.

[1] *G. della Casa*, Il trattato.

[2] *Muratori*, Antiq. Ital., IV, 320.

[3] *Marcotti*, Donne e monache, p. 408.

[4] Nozze Nardi-Arnaldi, Fir., 1881, p. 112.

The statutes of Lucca required female servants to be either married or widowed;[1] the master who caused his servant to become pregnant was fined everywhere, and, in 1354, a man was liable to be hanged for this offence.[2] Barberino, early in the thirteenth century, admonished females not to take service with a bachelor, to cherish the mistress as a mother, whose ill is their ill, to look after her clothes and jewels, not to listen to what goes on in the bedchamber, not to tattle out of doors, not to eulogize the beauty of their mistress, and to bear themselves humbly when an employer is hasty, and to love and cherish her children.

The female servant sat with her mistress at table, often shared her bed, and became a humble member of the family circle. If trustworthy, she often became unruly: "She treats me as if I were the domestic and she the mistress," wrote Alessandra Macinghi. And soon we hear that domestics "refuse to be subject, and, conscious of their freedom, oppose their employers, or at least measure out their obedience, sometimes with reason and sometimes without. This is a fact, and it arises from every one giving a higher value to his own requirements than to those of others, even when all is fair dealing, and so, thinking he has given more than he has received, the one says, 'I have worn myself out in your service,' and the other, 'You owe me your maintenance, and how kind I have been!'"[3]

During the High Middle Age the labouring population of Italy were serfs. But the rising cities set

[1] Archiv. stor. it., S.I., X, 93. [2] *Zanelli*, Le Schiave, p. 107.

[3] *G. della Casa*, Trattato degli uffici comuni tra gli amici superiore e inferiore.

them free in order to cut at the root of the power of rustic nobles and place them under the heel of the commune. Padua set free her serfs, male and female, in 1235; Brescia in 1239; in 1256 Bologna emancipated over 6,000 serfs belonging to more than 400 lords, and inscribed their names in a book called the "Paradise of Delights";[1] in 1262 Siena forbade the sale of slaves;[2] in 1289 Florence abolished serfdom throughout her domain, and by the end of the thirteenth century very few bondsmen or bondswomen were to be found in Italy. In Aquileia we find the female serfs, gathering, clad in white, to be pronounced free women, at the introduction of the Patriarch Pertoldo.[3]

But many Italian merchants had places of business in the Levant; they dwelt there and kept slaves. About the middle of the fourteenth century they introduced Oriental slaves into Italy, and the practice spread; for religious and social prejudice approved of compelling pagan foreigners to drudge for a superior Christian race, and no one thought it shameful to trade in them. The series of great plagues, which began in 1348, left the land almost bare of labour, and so promoted the practice, as did the general disinclination to matrimony and the growth of luxury. Marriage itself was a species of sale, and the purchase of female slaves and of concubinage with them was far from shocking the moral sense. In the early part of the thirteenth century 10,000 slaves were imported annually into the Venetian market

[1] *Savioli*, Annali di Bologna, III, ii. 338.

[2] *G. Salvemeni*, Studi storici, 1901.

[3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 381.

alone.[1] "Tartars are hardiest and best for work," wrote Alessandra Macinghi; "Russians are built on finer lines and are better looking, but, in my opinion, Tartars are preferable. Circassians are a superior breed, wherefore everybody seeks them."[2] Girls, and sometimes youths, of Servian, Bulgarian, Greek and Albanian birth were to be found on sale at the markets of Venice, Genoa and Naples. A hard-working young woman might fetch six ducats and upwards; a pretty girl cost as much as eighty-seven ducats at Venice.[3] So, a hundred years after the liberation of native serfs we find a large number of imported slaves in Italy, chiefly women employed as nurses and in domestic work. We read in the traders' diaries such entries as these, "1375, Margherita, a slave, came to dwell with us; to have 30 lire a year. 1377, Maddalena, a slave, came to dwell with us to nurse Zenobi: to have 14 florins a year," and later, "Chaterina, a slave, came to dwell with us to nurse Zenobi: to have 15 florins a year".[4] In 1400 we find an official of the Commune of Bologna selling a young girl in male attire for fifteen ducats.[5] Maria Madalina de' Malatesta, writing to Cosimo de' Medici, asks him to buy her a female Tartar slave and see to it that he is not robbed over the transaction.[6] The book of house-

[1] *Bonghi*, Le Schiave orientali in Italia, Nuova Antologia, S.I., II, 242.

[2] *C. Guasti*, Lettere di una gentildonna, 1877, p. 475.

[3] *E. Muntz*, La renaissance, etc., 1885, p. 29.

[4] Archiv. stor. it., 4, I, 15.

[5] *Mazzoni-Toselli*, Racconti storici tratti dell' archivio criminale di Bologna, I, 846.

[6] *Yriarte*, loc. cit., 447.

hold expenses of a Bolognese monastery contains entries of 800 lire for the purchase of a female Circassian slave in 1431, and of fifty-four florins for another slave in 1454.[1] A priest selling a slave, who turns out to be pregnant, to another priest, has to return the price.[2] Nunneries held slaves as well as monasteries, and, although slaves were not usually accepted as witnesses, the slaves of nuns were allowed, in Venetia, to give evidence if their mistresses carried on intrigues with men, nor was such evidence required to be supported by other testimony—a fact which points to very kind treatment by the nuns, or there would have been plenty of false information. But becoming a Christian and being baptised did not carry freedom with it.[3] Beautiful Circassian slaves were much in demand and fetched the highest prices, but other races were preferred for rough work. The owner had absolute power over his slave and often we find her let and sublet.[4]

They were poorly housed : in 1445 we find one occupying a chamber whereof the furniture consisted solely of a hair mattress and a coverlet.[5] Slaves were, however, much better treated than were servants, and often had their freedom given them.[6] The testament of Giulia Gonzaga (1566) enjoins the liberation

[1] *Frati*, Vita privata di Bologna, 1900, p. 106, note 2.

[2] *Lazzari*, Del traffico e delle condizione degli schiavi in Venezia nel tempi di Mezzo, Miscell. di stor. it., I, 472.

[3] *Zanelli*, Schiave orientale a Firenze nel sec. xiv. e xv. Fir., 1885, appendice 103.

[4] *Bonghi*, loc. cit., 230.

[5] *C. Merkel*, I beni della famiglia di Puccio Pucci fiorentino, Bergamo, 1897, p. 188.

[6] *Masuccio*, nov. 22.

of her slave and further directs that she be dowered, and a husband found for her.[1] Caterina Cornaro had a slave, a negress, in whom she reposed more confidence than in any one else.[2] The master had full rights, but any one else who debauched a female slave was punished by fine or imprisonment; yet sometimes a bargain was struck, for a child was of some value. A property so valuable as a female slave was well protected in Genoa; a man taken with her might be killed on the spot. It shows a remarkable advance in ethical conceptions that in the sixteenth century we find at Ferrara (1567) a master is fined for the corruption of a slave, and the unsupported testimony of the slave is enough to convict of this offence.[3]

It is not difficult to understand that female slaves were a constant source of trouble in families. Seven children were born of slaves in two years in the Guinigi family. Of 167 children brought to the foundling hospital at Siena in the early years of the fifteenth century fifty-five were born of slaves, sixteen of free women, and the rest of unknown mothers. Francesco Datini of Prato, like many a burgher, had a daughter by a slave Lucia. First of all he conveyed the child, secretly, to the foundling hospital, but afterwards he removed her, had her educated, and married her off, with great rejoicings, in which his wife joined. He also procured Lucia a husband and left her 200 lire in his will.[4] The slave-mothers

[1] *Affo*, Memorie di tre principesse di Casa Gonzaga, p. 46.

[2] *P. Bembo*, Degli asolani, lib. I.

[3] *Cibrario*, Della schiavita e dello servizio, 1868; *Bonghi*, loc. cit.; *Lazari*, loc. cit.

[4] *C. Guasti*, Lettere di un notaro, II, 65, 77, 127, 191, 192, 278.

who bore children to their masters were usually well provided for,[1] and, after child-bearing, they were in great request as wet-nurses. Cosimo de' Medici, *Pater Patriæ*, had a son, by a Turkish slave, whom he brought up with his legitimate children, and this lad became Provost of Prato. Alessandra Macinghi writes to her son Filippo, 22 March, 1463, that she is told of a slave who knows how to do well for him; on 7 April she speaks of the clothes this Marina makes for him, and a year later Marina is sarcastically referred to as "Madama".[2] Filippo liberated Marina in his will. The mothers of bastard sons, whether slaves or not, were usually very well provided for by testament.

We learn from documents and pictures that negro pages and buffoons were in vogue after the fifteenth century; ladies brought them to be foils to their own fair beauty; negresses only were admitted to the apartments of the Duchess of Tuscany.[3] But the trade in domestic slaves was diminishing, for the Turkish wars had interrupted the activity of eastern markets.

[1] *Molmenti*, Storia di Venezia, etc., 1880, p. 295.

[2] *C. Guasti*, Lettere di una gentildonna, pp. 274, 280, 422.

[3] *G. E. Saltini*, Tragedie Medicee domestiche, Fir., 1898, p. 82.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MOTHER

IN certain cases, where legal questions as to legitimacy and succession were involved, a jury of matrons was summoned to visit the expectant mother and furnish a report. In 1372 we find the Council of Cividale deputing three widows of experience to this office, and, at another time, the Council of Udine ordering three women of repute to dwell with a pregnant widow and to call in two other ladies of standing to be present at the birth.

One is surprised to come across the crinoline in the sixteenth century. It was invented for pregnant women, was composed of hoops of iron, and called the *guardinfante*, for it was worn not as a disguise, but as an instrument of protection. In a work published in 1583, but treating of a slightly antecedent period,[1] we find that it became fashionable for women to wear the *guardinfante*, whether they needed it or not : Fiammetta, one of the young ladies in this work, says that the *guardinfante* is undoubtedly useful in walking, since it leaves the limbs free ; but she has avoided it since it renders it difficult to pass through a doorway or sit down, and one has to do so with great circumspection if one does not wish to make an

[1] Ragionamento di sei nobili fanciulle.

exhibition. Clelia replies that the instrument is agreeable to young men, who are not indifferent to such prospects, and Fiammetta agrees that it does give further opportunities to impertinent youths who are always on the look-out when a lady mounts a staircase or high step.

Noble ladies took advantage of the increase of wealth to prepare sumptuous layettes. Eleonora of Aragon, the wife of Ercole I of Ferrara, ordered for the cradle, in 1474, four woollen mattresses and a bolster, all covered with azure-blue taffeta, white damask hangings, and a silk coverlet of white damask lined with white taffeta, and fringed with gold and silk.[1] In the Middle Ages and throughout the Renaissance the natural facts of life were taken quite simply. When it was made known to the Ferrarese that their duchess, Renée, was pregnant, fête succeeded fête; there were tourneys, masks and morris-dances, comedies were performed, and many banquets were given.[2] It was a favourite amusement with all classes to bet on the length of time a newly married couple would remain childless, or as to the sex of an expected child. This habit, *redoglio* as it was called, became so common that the Church felt bound to condemn it, and did so towards the end of the sixteenth century.

The expectant mother was kept in constant anxiety by current superstitions: she might not sneeze, for instance, lest the "filament of life," otherwise the umbilical cord, should drop; and her child might be born on some day when the planets boded misfortune to herself and her offspring. If quickening occurred

[1] *Gandini*, Isabella, Beatrice e Alfonso d' Este, p. 17.

[2] See *Rodocanachi*, Renée de France.

late, a girl might be expected. It was some consolation to an expectant mother to know that if she died in childbed her child was certain of a brilliant career.[1] The moon had much to do with conception, and, while a boy in the womb received his soul on the fortieth day, a girl had to wait four months for that fateful companion :[2] we find a woman, under accusation of infanticide, pleading that she had slain a girl fœtus of two months only.[3]

The wife was usually little more than a child when she became a mother. Parisina, Marchioness of Este (the heroine of Byron's poem), was but sixteen when (1419) she issued an announcement "to the commune and inhabitants of our city of Modena. Beloved, We inform you, for your happiness, that this 25 Mar. at the tenth hour, by the ineffable grace of God, we gave daylight to two lusty female twins." Birth followed birth with great rapidity ; the case of Caterina Sforza, who had a child in 1479, another in 1480, and another in 1481, is by no means exceptional ; huge families were the rule, and so was death in infancy and childhood, while records in the trader's diaries of death in childbed recur frequently and make sad reading. It is wonderful that so many women survived a trial, which remains perilous in these days of cleanliness and antisepsis, when one thinks of the insanitary state of the home and of the city, or comes across such records as the following : "The said Caterina, was the wife of me, Oderigo,

[1] *M. Palmieri*, Vita Civile.

[2] *Sperone Speroni*, Dialoghi Ven. 1558 (Del tempo del partire).

[3] *Rodocanachi*, La femme italienne à l'époque de la renaissance, 1907, p. 3.

whom I took in Padua, June 13th, 1399, and in 1400, on June 10th, she presented me with a male child, whom I called Andrea, and in the same year on Dec. 8th, the day of the conception of Our Lady, palsy fell on her, so that she lost the use of her right side and also of her tongue, whereby she never spoke again. And she lived in this plight until 1404, and had a female child in that year on Oct. 25th, and the said Caterina my lady died, as pleased God, and I had her buried at Santo on Nov. 4th, in our grave which was made when my father died. May God in his infinite mercy give peace to the souls of them all."[1] It was not without good reason, then, that a young wife dared not approach her hour of peril without making a will; there are indeed more wills of women extant than of men. If she did not actually make a will her husband and relatives usually agreed to an arrangement providing against what might happen to her in childbed. The testatrix usually gave the usufruct of property to her husband and the dower to prospective children, but if they should die in infancy or without issue it would go to her relatives.[2] This at least was usual among Genoese.

The lying-in chamber became a crowded reception room. Il Casola, a priest of Milan, when passing through Venice at the end of the fifteenth century, was conducted to the house of a lady who had just had a child; he believed that not even the Queen of France could have been surrounded by more pomp; "there were in the chamber twenty-five damsels, each more beautiful than the other, who had come to visit the

[1] Ricordi di *Oderigo di Credi*, Arch. stor., 4, I, 55.

[2] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., 38.

invalid. . . . They showed not above four to six fingers' breadth of naked flesh below the shoulder in front and behind." He thought the bed, fixed in an alcove, must have cost 500 ducats, and the resplendent jewels of the lady-visitors twenty times that sum ; " their faces were very well painted ".[1] It was the custom for visitors to bring presents to the mother on salvers of silver or gold, or a repast on a majolica plate.[2] In Milan, ladies visiting the lying-in room were ordered to bring fruits only, and numerous edicts were issued at Venice to put a stop to expensive presents, officers being appointed to make investigations and penetrate even into the accouchement chamber, if necessary, to make sure that these were not infringed. But these statutes, like others of the kind, were not consistently enforced : trade would, in that case, have been ruined.[3]

In the western part of the great plain three peals of bells, rung in a certain manner, announced the birth of a boy, two peals that of a girl. At Venice the *levatrice* announced the success of her mission to Government officials. Professional midwives are mentioned as early as the fourteenth century. The hour of birth was carefully noted for the casting of the child's nativity—a practice derived from the Arab-subjects of the Emperor Frederick II.

The advent of a girl was little welcomed, and the rejoicings for the birth of a female princess were

[1] *P. Casola*, Il viaggio a Jerusalemme, Milano, 1855.

[2] *E Muntz*, Les plateaux des accouchées, 1894.

[3] *F. Sansovino*, Degli habiti e costumi e usi della città, p. 153 ; *Molmenti*, Storia di Venezia nella vita privata, Torino, 1880, pp. 247-8.

usually of a feeble character ; even to-day an Italian peasant, when questioned about his family, may reply, "I have none—only girls ".[1] When Isabella d' Este had a daughter, Lorenzo de' Medici wrote a letter of condolence to her husband and wished him boys in the future, and the mother put aside a gilded cradle that she had got ready. Marco Parenti wrote to console Filippo Strozzi for his misfortune in being presented with a daughter, and reminded him that, after all, he already had a son.

Among the lower class, in Venice, at least, the babe's ears were carefully examined, for a long ear pointed to a long life, and contrariwise ; the ears of boys were pierced to ward off convulsions, and medals and beads were hung round the child to keep off evil spirits. Precisely as is done to-day, the child was closely invested in swaddling-clothes.[2] The danger of overlaying an infant was fully recognized : at the very beginning of our period we find parents heavily fined in the Patriarchate of Aquileia for taking their babes into bed with them, and, in default, the mother was liable to a punishment almost specially reserved to women, since they were generally credited with some concern for their personal appearance—she might have to part with her nose.[3] The general rule for the well-to-do mother was that she should lie in bed for three weeks after parturition, and then go to be churched.

A well-to-do mother gave her babe over to a wet-nurse, and her children were sent out of the over-

[1] *E. Legouvé*, Hist. Morale des Femmes, 10th ed., p. 17.

[2] *Molmenti*, Storia di Venezia, Bergamo, 1906, II, 557.

[3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 63.

crowded, ill-served house and unhealthy town to the hills, where hardy peasants were glad enough to increase their little store by taking charge of them. The diaries are full of instances such as, "We gave to nurse, on Nov. 20, 1378, Alessandro Salvadore, to Monna Nuta di Santino da Fornace. To receive 50 soldi. The said Nuta carried with her the underwritten articles : a cradle, a little cloak with ten silver buttons, a little blue mantle" and some nursery requisites.[1] A notary of Pescia puts out his child to nurse, paying 3 lire 6 soldi the month and granting the foster-mother the privilege of making lace to her own profit in leisure moments ; and Ottavio Galeotto gives a little son, happily "born with all his members," to a contadina of Montecarlo in 1590, paying 5 lire per month.[2] The outfit of a Pescian notary's little son, nine months old, who was put out to nurse in 1461, was a cradle, with its bed, a feather pillow, a red mantle lined with white skin, an azure-blue mantle, a little black monk's cap, two new little shirts, a fair supply of linen, etc., and a piece of felt to protect the bed or nurse : there is finery enough but none too much underwear for the bitter month—it was January —when the little fellow was sent forth ! Children remained a long time with their foster-mother, and she taught the girls to sew, to make butter, and to draw a fowl ; useful accomplishments to the future housewife, especially as Fortune, that fickle maid, was even more than usually unsteady in those tumultuous communes !

The mother, after nursing her babe for a month or

[1] Ricordi *Antilla*, Archiv. stor. it., iv. I, 17.

[2] *Stiavelli*, loc. cit., p. 111.

two, was sure to find those household duties which, owing to the limited service at her command, she had to perform with her own hands, heavy enough without the babe, and putting it into the hands of a wet nurse was a grateful relief from much trouble and responsibility ; moreover, early removal admitted of a larger family—no unimportant matter in days when death claimed so many children. Moralists protested against the practice in vain. Palmieri, in the fifteenth century, spoke of " mothers, deserving the hate of their children," putting them " to the slavish breasts of Tartars and Saracens and the women of other animal and outlandish folk. It is the duty of a mother to nurse her own child, and servants should be put to material duties only. But since a bad fashion ordains that babes should be left to the mercies of strange women," [1] our author proceeds to give sensible directions for the selection of a good nurse. One merchant writes : " Let the mother nurse when she can do so without peril or injury, but if not, give the infant to a healthy, cheerful nurse, the husband being away, and she no stammerer ".[2] The practice continues in Italy to-day, though in the sixteenth century we come across such strong protests as this, " The father should compel the mother to nurse her child, both for the tie of blood and the strong love that results ".[3]

Alas ! there was many a little coffin borne in sad procession in those days. The loss of children is recorded in stoic vein. On 1 June, 1295, Ghita degli

[1] Vita civile.

[2] *Giov. Rucellai*, Zibaldone ; on this subject see *Cantù*, loc. cit., vii. 37, and *Guidini*, Arch. st. it., I, iv. 44 sqq.

[3] *Sadoleto*, De liberis institutendis, Ven., 1533.

Adimari, wife of Guido dell' Antella, bore him a son who was named Dio : " in September after, Our Lord took him to Himself ". " In the year 1296, on April 11th, it being Friday, at mid-day, I had Bartolommeo of the said Ghita. God claimed him also." " In the year 1297 on May 11th, in the morning, I had Tomasa of Ghita, and, soon after, the Lord took her to Himself." " In the year 1298, on Jany. 18th, being Monday, at tierce, I had Attaviano of Ghita. God took him to Himself." Then, between 1300 and 1312, follow four boys and two girls, who lived, it would seem.[1] Such a death-rate among infants rendered parents callous. Ser Lapo Mazzei, in the midst of a business letter, suddenly recollects that he has just buried the bonniest of his twins, aged seven, who died of small-pox ; he announces the fact, gives thanks to God, and returns to the business at hand.[2] Heartbroken mothers sought refuge in pious resignation, praising and blessing the Lord for fulfilling His Will.[3]

In Dante's day infants were taken in batches to be baptized, and it would seem that immersion was still practised.[4] These customs account for the noble spacious baptisteries that arose. About this time, in some parts of Italy, very grand names, such as Superba, Leta, etc., were bestowed on girls ; but few could add them to a family-name, for folk were called after their place of birth, their occupation, or, in the case of boys, the name of the man to whom they were apprenticed. The use of a family-name began, in its true, in the tenth century, but it spread very slowly, and was

[1] Ricordi di *G. Antella*, Arch. st. it., IV, 1. 13, 14.

[2] *Guasti*, Ser Lapo Mazzei, I, 287.

[3] *Maulde la Clavière*, loc. cit., p. 127. [4] Inf., xix. 15.

hardly used by those of lower rank in the sixteenth century. The daughters of the humbler folk received nicknames, which stuck to them and served as surnames : such were " fat," " short," " shift," " peahen ".[1] When the classical fever was at its height, in the fifteenth century, Greek and Latin names were given to infants, or names of so absurd and extravagant a character were invented as to evoke strong protests.[2] At Genoa, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, young ladies, on arriving at puberty, would change their name to something they deemed very pretty and suitable, or select a name that would convey a compliment to some family, and register it before a notary. Agnese becomes Pellegrina ; diminutives, such as Battistina, Francheschetta, etc., were preferred.[3]

Baptism became almost as pompous and expensive a ceremony as marriage, and here the vulgar side of the Renaissance is exposed. In Venice the infant was taken to the ceremony under a *baldaquino*, or in a gilded chair, and accompanied by a pompous procession ; there was a feast afterwards, and perhaps a tourney.[4]

It was *de rigueur*, everywhere, for the godparents to give very costly presents : Lorenzo de' Medici gave his godson Giovanni Galeazzo Sforza a gold necklace with a large diamond worth about 3,000 ducats, whereat—" the duke wanted me to stand godfather to all the sons that may be born to him," he writes.

[1] *L. Zdekauer*, Le donne nella lira del 1297, Boll. sen. X, 93.

[2] *Alberti*, Della famiglia ; *Maffeo Veggio*, De educ. liberorum, lib. I, cx.

[3] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., pp. 8, 9.

[4] Cronache della città di Fermo.

With the increase of wealth and luxury the parents received presents as well as the infant, and godfathers were expected to give godmothers rich dresses and cakes.[1] They received sweetmeats from the parents in return for their gifts. Small wonder that the number of godparents increased up to six or nine in Florence,[2] up to 150, even, in Venice! But, apart from all question of expense, circumspection had to be used before accepting the office, for godfather and godmother might not marry.[3] Of course there were the usual ineffective attempts to put down lavish expenditure at baptisms by edict.

How large a place the family affections occupied in life is very evident. Machiavelli complains that Lorenzo was often found romping with his children ;[4] the secretary of Francesco of Mantua writes to him that his little girl of three would like to have a new doll dressed in silk,[5] and the Archbishop of Benevento reproves the family-man who is for ever talking about his wife and children and praising them.[6] We find the mother teaching her children to read ; Bianca Maria the wife of Francesco Sforza, ruler of Milan, superintends the education of her children, gives orders that their training shall be practical—such as will make them princes, not pedants—expects a weekly letter from her eldest son, and, whenever she and the worn old condottiere, her husband, go from home, they take

[1] *G. Rucellai*, given by *Marcotti*, Nozze Nardi-Arnaldi, 1881.

[2] Ricordi di *Guicciardini* and *Filippo di Neri Rinnucini*.

[3] *Rodocanachi*, La femme italienne, etc., 1907, p. 10.

[4] Le istorie fiorentine, lib. viii.

[5] *Luzio* e *Renier*, Mantova e Urbino, p. 75.

[6] *Giovanni della Casa*, Il galateo.

some of the children with them. A widow, in the fifteenth century, whose trader-sons are away from her in various parts of Europe, and whose relatives are political exiles from Florence, does not know how to live without her youngest son : " too much is the grief I feel and too great the love I bear him, for he is very like his father," she writes (26 Dec., 1449). " I owe you greater love than you owe me," she says to one of her sons (20 April, 1465).[1] She wishes a son to marry, and looks about her with the keen eye of a woman of business, who also knows her own sex, for a suitable wife, " for he who would eat at the proper time should think about it first " (29 Mar., 1465). " The devil is not so black as he is painted," she assures the somewhat reluctant man. Finally she becomes a capital grandmother, delighting in her little grandson's prattle, and we find him following her about " as a chick does a brooding hen " (8 May, 1496).[2]

Mothers did not always take kindly to the new learning for their sons. " As to Giovanni," writes Poliziano, the famous scholar, of his little pupil of the great house of Medici, " his mother employs him in reading his psalter, of which I disapprove. So long as she kept from interference he got on rapidly, so that he could read without help."[3] Perhaps mothers were a little apt to spoil their boys, too ; a barber asked one curled darling if he were going to be married or wanted a husband, so girlishly had his mother decked him out. Nor did maternal solicitude always cease when sons had grown up : Ghibellino Vadulo, who got his face injured while jousting, signed

[1] *Guasti*, Lettere di una gentildonna, 587. [2] *Guasti*, ibid.
[3] *A. Fabroni*, Laurentii Medicis Vita, Pisa, 1784.

a notary's act wherein he promised to give up jousting for two years to satisfy his mother, and we find Leonora, Duchess of Mantua, writing to that graceless young scamp who ran the Admirable Crichton through the body, "I pray you do not behave in a disorderly way at Ferrara, nor eat unmannerly; and speak in a gentlemanly way, and don't screech as you do at home."[1]

The moral influence of the mother had no small effect on an affectionate son. Lanfredino Lanfredini, a merchant, writes to his son (10 June, 1395), "Your mother expects much from you; therefore bear yourself so as to fulfil her hopes".[2] The mother deserved a good return for all her loving care; one who speaks by no means too favourably of the citizens of Ferrara is obliged to confess that "all the women possess a truly admirable quality; they train their children so well in courtesy, manners, and the show of breeding that all the ladies of all other lands might copy them".[3] But everywhere the evidence as to the diligent and loving care of mothers is overwhelming; a tender confidence existed between mother and son, and the son invariably speaks of the memory of his mother as a hallowed one. "My mother," says Donati Velluti (1313-70), "was a sagacious and beautiful lady, fresh and rosy of complexion, pretty tall, decorous and virtuous in life. She endured much labour and anxiety in bringing my brothers and me up; for I may say

[1] *G. B. Intra*, Giovinezza del pr. Vincenzo Gonzaga, Archiv. st. it., IV, iv. 18.

[2] *P. Dazzi*, Lettere inedite del sec xiv. Firenze, 1867, p. 35.

[3] *Il della Rene*, Relazione, quoted by *A. Solerti*, Ferrara e la corte estense, lxiv.

that I had no other guidance, lacking especially that of my father, since he was for ever abroad ; indeed, she deserved much commendation thereby. Praise indeed she had for her *onestà* and life, she being beautiful and her husband so much away. I took after her in rosiness and fresh complexion. She was a manager and had need to be one, with a great family, separated from her brothers and having my father in the sort of way she had. . . . And she came by her death in this wise : Our father being in Tunis and we having received a farm in payment, and being gone to it for the summer and returning with her on horseback . . . the horse started and galloped some way and threw her to the ground so that she broke her leg. Some one set it, but did not bleed her, and afterwards she was brought to Florence in a basket sledge drawn by mules (stanghe), and they re-set the leg ; but, being in bed on St. Martin's day and many ladies with her, prating and prattling, suddenly she said, ' O me,' and departed this life. God keep her soul, as He must, for she was a dear, good woman and only confessed the day before."[1] Cristofani Guidini of Siena tells us how his mother remained a widow on his account, enduring poverty and bringing him up with great difficulty. Rucellai thanks God "for granting me a worthy mother, named Caterina, who had four sons at the time our father, Pagolo, died, and though only nineteen years of age, she would not forsake us, and made strong resistance to the desires of her brothers and mother, and was with me long, for she lived to be over eighty and was my greatest consolation."

[1] Quoted by *D'Ancona e Bacci*, Manuale delle lett. ital., 1904, I, 576.

Sometimes we find a good mother very devoted to her girls as well as to her sons. When Lorenzo de' Medici married his daughter, Maddalena, to the illegitimate son of the Pope he wrote begging that she might be allowed to remain at home a little longer, "for she is the apple of her mother's eye". A specially careful mother would keep her daughters from reading Boccaccio, and even the sonnets of Petrarch, "for," says a moralist, "although it is the custom, it is not good that the pure minds of girls should learn other love than that of God and their own husbands. Teach them to read sacred things, lives of the Fathers, histories or similar treatises, so that they may learn to conduct their lives and ways wisely and turn to grave and not to light matters."[1] Most mothers would have small scruple in trouncing a disobedient daughter, though some were of the opinion of Palmieri that it destroyed filial love and that "judicious reproach was enough for the noble soul".[2] Often, in the absence of the husband or when left a widow, the mother sought counsel of some friar or priest as to the guidance of her children. In reply to such a request, made in 1378 by the widow of an exile, a Dominican, who became Cardinal of Ragusa, wrote a treatise, wherein he recommends pictures on religious themes to be hung up in the house, so as to impress the plastic mind through the senses; Holy Writ to be read to children as soon as they can understand it; and care to be taken in choosing their companions. When corrected they are to thank the parents and be silent before them, standing up; they are to be blessed

[1] *V. Bisticci*, Vita di Alessandria de' Bardi.

[2] Vita civile—written mid-fifteenth century.

night and morning and given a hand to kiss, and after kissing it the child is at once to search for the nearest representation of the cross that may be in the house and kiss it too.[1]

Among the antique Romans organized society depended largely on kinship; among the Langobards the unit of society was the whole family, constituted by blood-relationship; social existence depended on the strength of this family unit, and family vendetta was a rough execution of justice. In the clash of conflicting forces that marked the evolution of the Italian communes every child, legitimate or illegitimate, born into the family was a potential increase of strength. That bastard boy who was the fruit of the subtle abduction of Nature which excites members of opposite sexes into passion, was often, if not usually, bolder, robuster and abler than the progeny of unions determined by policy and calculation; he was a welcome addition to the house to which his father belonged. Concubinage lay near to marriage, for the latter might be constituted by a loose civil form, and bastardy carried no grave stigma with it before the pronouncements of the Council of Trent. The travelling merchant usually married late and had bastards before he took a wife, and his bride invariably received them (often those born after her marriage, too) and brought them up with her own children; for she owed her chief duty to her husband and the whole family of blood-relations that adopted and protected her. The maternal instinct easily diffuses itself, and it embraced those children that were her husband's though not hers, undeterred by social doctrines which belong to a later

[1] *G. Dominichi*, Regola del' Governo di cura familiare.

age. To readers of the ancient classics this will cause no surprise. The custom persisted, and no sooner does humanism appear than we find illegitimate children buried in the family vault. By Florentine law a husband might recommend his mistress to the care of his wife by will, but not his bastard-children, yet we often find good-hearted wives looking after both them and their mother.[1] Parisina d' Este, who like Francesca di Rimini, read French romances once too often, and fell a victim to her infatuation for one of her lord's illegitimate sons, was very kind to her husband's small boys and even looked after their tutor's clothes. "It would do discredit to my lord," so she writes to her husband, "if his son's tutor went about almost naked. We pray you to furnish him with breeches, a mantle and a cap."[2] In the early part of the fifteenth century Antongaleazzo Bentivoglio and Gaspare Malvezzi were both intimate with the same woman and each held himself to be the father of a new-born male child. At the end of an animated discussion as to paternity, Gaspare said, "Since neither of us is really sure, let us settle it by dice". Bentivoglio threw highest, and brought up the child, and, after his death, Francesca Gozzadini, his widow, who was childless, was never more pleased than when she was called the boy's mother.[3] Lucrezia Tornabuoni sent for a posthumous illegitimate son of her son, Giuliano de' Medici, after his assassination, and, "being very affectionate to her

[1] *F. T. Perrens*, Histoire de Florence jusqu'à la domination des Médicis, 1879-83, iii.

[2] *E. Rodocanachi*, Une Phèdre italienne, Paris, 1896, p. 11.

[3] *Gherardacci*, Storia di Bologna, lib. xxxi. For further adventures of this son see *Galeazzo Marescotti de' Calvi*, Cronica, Arch. st. it., III, xv. 222 sqq.

blood," brought him up.[1] Bianca Maria Visconti took charge of her illegitimate grand-daughter, Caterina Sforza, and when Bianca died, Bona of Savoy, legal wife of the father, had the child reared with her legitimate brothers and sisters. In her turn, Caterina took an illegitimate child of her husband's and brought it up with her own children. Elisabetta of Urbino brought up her illegitimate niece, the daughter of Francesco Gonzaga, born before his marriage. And the Duke of Ferrara (1472) thought it would be a graceful thing to send the portrait of his illegitimate daughter, Lucrezia, to Leonora of Naples, his prospective bride. This young lady was trained up by Leonora with her own daughters.[2]

[1] *Jacopo Nardi*, Ist. della città di Firenze, VI. cap. XXXI.; *Guicciardini*, *Ist.*, xii. cap. IV.

[2] *J. Cartwright*, Beatrice d' Este, 1898, p. 33.

CHAPTER IX

WIDOWHOOD. SICKNESS. DEATH AND BURIAL

THAT natural vanity which finds expression even in the garb of grief was kept under bounds by severe sumptuary laws. In Siena, for example, though the wearing of black was imperative on the widow and she covered her head with a veil, this last named token of anguish was not to cost more than a florin, and the city fathers restricted the train to a quarter of an arm's length [1]—quite sufficient to sweep the filthy lanes of the city. Wondrous headgear was affected at Florence. Donato Velluti tells us of a widow on whose head a great building-stone fell, but she was so well protected that the accident discomposed her no more than would "the dirt cast up by a scratting fowl, and she asked whatever it could be." [2]

The widow shared with men in the fierce passion of revenge, and she supported the practice of vendetta; but often a money-payment was accepted by women as atonement for a murder or homicide, and sometimes we find them granting pardon. In 1300 a widow forgives the slayer of her son on condition that he make a pilgrimage to Rome to the advantage of the soul of the dead and return to render her proof of his

[1] *Casanova*, La donna senese, Boll. sen., viii. p. 92.

[2] *D'Ancona e Bacci*, loc. cit., I, 576.

having obtained absolution. Another widow pardons the man who killed her husband on condition that he leave the neighbourhood and give two bushels of meal a year for the saying of masses for the repose of the dead. In cases of debt to herself the widow seems to have been less merciful. One Valdrada formally requests the priests to withhold the sacraments from a man who owes her money until he has paid it.[1]

It was an ancient belief that the re-marriage of his widow distressed the soul of a deceased husband. Lucrezia Gonzaga, writing to Orsola Pellegrini from Venice, in 1552, asks, "Do you not know that a woman invariably ceases to be regarded as chaste if she marries again?" The prejudice against the second marriage of a woman was widespread in Italy throughout our period. A jurisconsult of the fifteenth century informs us that at Perugia widows might only be married at night. Tumultuous scenes attended these second marriages, and at Gallese, in 1576, statutes had to be passed to prevent riots or attempts to impede such unions.[2] The criminal records of Genoa are full of convictions for brawling, rioting, and making "rough music" by beating iron pots, etc., under the windows of the re-married widow.[3] Doubtless religious views as to the sacramental character of marriage reinforced ancient superstition; Bisticci, the pious bookseller, praises the saintly widow who keeps her chaste state. But there would seem to have been no feeling

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit.

[2] *A. de Gubernatis*, La poésie amoureuse de la renaissance italienne, 1907, p. 244.

[3] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., p. 45.

against the widower who married again. The husband of a woman who was carried off in a Turkish raid was given permission to marry again on the understanding that if his first wife returned he would take her back and restore her dower to the second wife, who, on her part agreed, in that case, to take a second husband.[1] Francesco di Bartolomeo di Zanobi del Giocondo married one lady in 1491, another in 1493, and yet another (Leonardo's Monna Lisa) in 1495.

But repeated visitations of plague and the high rate of mortality struck a blow at sentiment, and the second and even the third marriage of a widow became neither very uncommon nor resented in many cities. It was urged that a widow was incapable of managing that part of the property of her husband which became hers by law, though, as a matter of fact, widows often proved themselves more competent, thrifty, and long sighted in business matters than their dead spouses had been. Every effort was made to arrange some fresh marriage that would further the interests of her family, and, to this end, the retention of the widow's dower by her relatives was a very effective means ; moreover, it was convenient to fathers and brothers and deemed advantageous to the widow to multiply protection for her in days when pestilence came so unexpectedly and mowed down so many stalwart men. And the widow, on her return to her own family, found herself in a very subordinate position, only relieved by the pilgrimages she might undertake for the benefit of her dead husband's soul : we find an artisan's wife of Pordenone

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 73.

arranging to travel to the Holy Sepulchre.[1] The *status* of the widow was by no means enviable, and the hardship of her lot drove many a widow to the convent or to unseemly courses ; according to Perrens she often became a prostitute. The case of Chiara of Rimini, who lived a vicious life after the death of her husband, is by no means singular.[2] In high places we often find suppressed passion suddenly flaring up, and we frequently come across such instances as that of Bona of Savoy, the widow of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, who fell in love with Tassini, the house-servant of her late husband, a handsome varlet with an abundance of curly locks ; whereby indirectly she brought ruin on Italy, for Ludovico Sforza came into power through this liaison, and he called in the foreigner to maintain his rule. In lower circles we find spendthrift widows living for the hour ; such was one who spent all she had in enjoyment, "perambulating Florence the live-long day . . . and to-day she dwells in poverty ".[3]

On the other hand, many young widows devoted the remainder of their days to the training of their children, religious worship, and deeds of charity. The issue of a marriage was provided with several trustees besides the mother, and, if she married again, she forfeited her rights, for her children were removed from her custody. Uncles often proved very unsatisfactory trustees and guardians. We find Santa di Lorenzo appealing to the magistracy of Siena, 13 July, 1471, for the removal of her two boys from the tutelage of

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., pp. 92-93.

[2] *Ch. du Bussy*, Courtisanes devenues saintes, 1859, p. 150.

[3] *D'Ancona e Bacci*, loc. cit., p. 577.

Marchionne di Jacoma da Sanquiricho, her dead husband's brother, whom she describes as "an ingrate, an evil-doer, one incapable of wardship by reason of the number of his own children, a poor man, a beggar, who neglects them so that they have been hungry, shoeless and naked all this summer, bedless and lying on straw, and, with reverence be it spoken, eaten up by lice". Another widow (May, 1498) asks to have the custody of her boy; for her dead husband's brother "is a strange man and will not let me have my son with me, and, worst of all, he has seven sons, big and small, and I see that my boy is not well and I cannot endure to let him have him".[1] It is evident that the lot of widow and orphan could be very hard.

Old maids were rare. An unmarried girl out of her teens was already regarded as one. Donato Velluti draws, in a few words, a telling picture of two spinsters who "remained a long time, hoping for husbands, and, when that hope departed," did household work for their brothers to save them the expense of servants; "they were very kindly, and excessive chatterers, and died of the pestilence in 1348, being over forty years of age".

The reader need hardly be reminded that malarial fever was very common and often fatal, but most folk seem to have succumbed to phthisis, asthma and dropsy in such comparatively healthy places as Milan, and, after 1494, of syphilis.[2] Small-pox was com-

[1] *L. Zdekauer*, Lettere volgari del rinascimento, Boll. sen., IV, 255, 256.

[2] *E. Motta*, Morti in Milano, 1452-1552, Arch. stor. lomb., 1891.

mon, but was confused with other fevers. In those days of imperfect transport, famine was a sore and frequent visitant and caused many deaths, while plague, which first ravaged Italy in 1347-8, became endemic. In the merchants' diaries we frequently drop on such an appalling passage as the following : " The plague was in our house ; first it seized the man-servant Paccino, at the end of June, 1420 ; three days afterwards our slave, Marta, sickened ; on July 1st, Sandra, my daughter ; on July 5th, Antonia. We left our house for one opposite, and, in a few days, Veronica died ; so we left and went to the Via Chiara, where Bandecca and Pippa sickened, and both went to Heaven, Aug. 1st. God give peace to their souls." [1] In 1347, 400 persons died every day of the pestilence at Pisa. It is said that, at Orvieto and Siena, nine out of every ten died. Every city was certainly decimated and became a great mortuary.[2] Pregnancy sealed the doom of the woman who became infected ; " Caterina is not yet big with child, which, for such a time, is a precious fact," wrote Alessandra Macinghi, of a bride. The terror and demoralization caused by these inflictions is inconceivable. At first, hopeless despair and apathy seized on those still hale, " and no bell rang and no man wept " ; but, when plague became a frequent and expected visitant, precautionary measures were adopted ; bonfires were lighted in the streets, and sequestration of the sick and other sanitary expedients were employed. When the epidemic was over, churches were erected in thanksgiving and with the hope that a Merciful Providence would be appeased thereby, and that the saints, touched by new altars to their honour, would exercise

[1] *Gregorio Dati*, Libro segreto. [2] *Cibrario*, loc. cit., ii. 18.

their privilege and intercede. Solemn processions were arranged, and some of the survivors turned to a devout life. On the other hand, society became disorganized and the majority of folk utterly demoralized. Citizens refused to pay taxes, prices were upset, the lowest members of society became rich by despoiling the dead of jewels and rich raiments, servants and labourers could not be obtained, special statutes had to be passed for the cancelling of debt,[1] and wards were ruined by the frauds of their trustees. Sensual licence or religious frenzy dominated men and women alike. Yet, in this time of terror, when pestilence was added to the horrors of famine, vendetta and warfare, when a look was supposed to convey infection,[2] suicide still remained almost unknown.[3]

The insensitiveness of cultured ladies and men who, in the *Decameron*, withdraw from the plague-stricken city to amuse themselves, shocks the modern reader : it contrasts strangely with the bands of penitents of both sexes that traversed the land at the departure of the pestilence, veiled in white, singing penitential psalms and calling on sinners to repent. But it must not be forgotten that a healthy and joyous life was regarded as a prophylactic against the disorder.

As in all the tragedies of life, comedy is to be found peeping over the coffin. On the advent of plague in 1576, a strict cordon was drawn round the city of Mantua, and, on 12 April, a number of folk, who had left the city, lay encamped outside the walls ; men, women and children, in a half-starved and pitiable

[1] Boll. della Società Umbria, II, 167-75.

[2] Cronica senese.

[3] *M. Tabarrini*, Le consorterie nel medio evo, p. 125.

condition. Some gipsies came up, and joining the famished band, all made for Cremona, hoping to gain admission or force an entry. Foiled in this attempt they crossed the Olio, fighting their way through an alarmed country-side and losing three of their women. At Gola they hoped for a less hot reception, since the inhabitants of that place were not remarkable for attachment to authority, and had indeed maintained a profitable understanding with the larcenous gipsies; but, to their chagrin, no hospitality was offered; on the contrary, these old friends kept the invading host at bay. Now, news of the disturbance reached the Podestà of Brescia, who happened to be training some troops in the neighbourhood of Gola, and, forthwith, he marched them up. The unfortunate Mantuans and gipsies sought refuge in a tower, but the alarmed magistrate set it on fire, compelled the unhappy garrison to yield, sent many of his prisoners to the galleys and thoroughly scoured the country-side, ferreting out the women who had fled to the first hiding-place that offered itself. Meanwhile many frightened people of Gola took to their heels and spread dreadful reports: the whole country-side was in an agony of terror. A report flew in every direction that the brutal French were upon them, that Italy was again invaded and that the enemy were burning and slaughtering everybody as they advanced. Women and children shrieked and flew precipitately to the woods; the authorities of cities round about called on peaceful burghers to take up arms and set up defences; the monks professed to be ready for any martyrdom, but the nuns were like to die of fear. The streets of Bergamo were soon choked with crowds of women and children who sought refuge

there ; outside Lodi and other places they encamped in great multitudes. To such retreats of precarious safety women might be seen running from every direction, bearing pipkins piled up with food that they had snatched, piping hot, from the domestic hearth, and their aprons filled with hot pasties and hot bread, which burned not the linen only, but which were indispensable supplies that they dared not drop. As the news ran up the street, men might be seen rushing wildly from the barbers' shops, well lathered and half-shaved. The defenders of every fortress throughout North Italy were soon on the alert and prepared to make desperate resistance. At Melegnano a man came in panting and gasped out that he had only just been able to save himself from the Huguenots ; the Marchesa of the place, getting the bill of good-health without which even a great lady was hardly likely to gain admission to any city, set off in a skurry for Milan, where she arrived at midnight and was kept a good hour, cooling her heels, and, indeed, was finally only admitted at the Prince's intervention. Venice caught the alarm, and even Rome was in a fever, for it was reported there that the barbarians had burst through the Alpine passes and that all the population of Northern Italy had been hacked to pieces by the bloodthirsty Huguenots of France.[1]

The merchants record, in their diaries, details of their bereavements and the pomp of the funereal obsequies that followed, with direct and revealing simplicity. Luca da Panzano, once Podestà of Tigna, was a wily assassin in family vendetta and an unfaith-

[1] Archiv. stor. lomb., ann. ii. pp. 76-85.

ful husband. He placed his illegitimate child, born when he was 52, twenty years after his marriage with a girl fourteen years his junior, in a Foundling Hospital (he claimed it, however, two years after his wife's death). A crafty, daring, energetic, successful man of the world was Luca; doing his duty, too, according to his lights. He reveals his own character with a self-unconsciousness that would be impossible in our more sophisticated age, and furnishes material of no small value to the right understanding of the mode of thinking and of living, the feelings and habits of the burgher-class of Florence. On 20 May, 1440, Luca records the death of his mother, "a most worthy lady," and her burial in the grave of her second husband; and, "on Nov. 5th, 1445, my wife Lucrezia, by whom I have eleven living children" (four only were dead) "passed away at two hours and a half of the night, it being Friday evening. How great was my grief! for she lived with me twenty years, one month, ten days. I pray God to pardon her her trespasses. She died after childbirth, and the child was believed to be dead in her body, but, because he was reported to be born alive, he was baptized in the house, and named Giovanni, and he is buried at Santo Simone, not in sacred soil. I clothed Christanza, my daughter, and Mona Chaterina in 14 arm's lengths of cloth for a cloak, and a couple of veils for the one and a wrapper for the other. They watched with the priests and friars in the house until eleven on the Sabbath morning, and she was buried that day, Nov. 6th, in Santa Croce, many relatives and friends attending. And the loss of this lady is great and felt by all Florence, for she was a good woman, and a sweet

and well-mannered woman, and made all that knew her to wish her well. And I believe her soul to be at the feet of the servants of God, for she had great humility and patience in dying, remaining ill fifteen days after the birth of her child ; one whom God, in his great mercy, has taken to his angels. On May 16th, 1446, I, Luca da Panzano, caused the first of sixty masses to be said, one each morning, for the relief and salvation of Lucrezia, my late lady. They are said by Brother Attaviano dell' Manghano of S. Croce at Florence, he being my confessor, to whom I have this day given two pounds in weight of wax-candles to burn at the masses at S. Croce, where Lucrezia is buried. I have given the said Brother Attaviano, as payment for his trouble, half an arm's length of smooth Alexandrian velvet." [1]

Wills preserved in the Neapolitan "arche" show that it was customary in that kingdom to say mass for the repose of the soul on the third, tenth and seventeenth days after death ; pilgrimages to famous churches are commanded, and money is bequeathed to monks, nuns and the poor. In the fourteenth century we find the wife of a judge leaving money for the useful purposes of bridge-building and road-making.[2]

The rich adornment of the dead was put down by sumptuary law at Pescia in 1340, and it became the rule, throughout Italy, for women to be buried in the habit of nuns of various orders. In Friuli a custom of great antiquity lingered on : a solemn dance was

[1] *C. Carnesecchi*, Un fiorentino nel sec xv e la sua ricordanze domestiche, Arch. stor. it., V, iv.

[2] Archiv. stor. per le provincie. nap., Ann. xxi. pp. 120-9.

performed before the church into which the dead body was carried.

In Florence, if death occurred during the night, the apothecary was at once summoned to send his helpers to perform the last offices, and, this done, the corpse was taken to the dead-house. Next day forms were set outside the door of the residence, and relatives and neighbours gathered and sat there. Burial took place the day after death, the bier being covered with black cloth.[1] At Pescia a bell tolled twice for men, once for women.[2] Everywhere the number of mourners to follow the body, the number to sit down at the funeral feast, their habits and the quantity and quality of the dishes were prescribed by sumptuary edict; yet we find women of consequence honoured with an enormous expenditure. At the funeral of a Pistojan, in 1381, all the ladies came dressed in blood-red[3]; later, in Florence at least, green became fashionable mourning, then perse (a sad tone between green and blue) and finally black, which elsewhere seems to have become already universally adopted. Gifts at funerals were first disallowed at Bologna, in 1276, and there and elsewhere women were forbidden to cry aloud or tear their hair (as they did after the antique manner), or in any way to yield themselves to the desperation of grief, though children under 7 years of age might do so.[4]

If a merchant died abroad the remains were usually brought home, and it was considered becoming in his widow to lament loudly over the coffin and be

[1] *Perrens*, loc. cit., 402. [2] *Stiavelli*, loc. cit., 116.

[3] *Guido di Francesco Molaldi*, Hist. Pist.

[4] *Frati*, loc. cit., 60; *Stiavelli*, loc. cit., 115, 116.

forcibly removed from it, making a great outcry. The period of mourning was limited, in Florence, to a few days, but a widow of Pisa might wear a mourning-hood and bedeck her head with furs for six months.[1] During the Renaissance a woman of learning or position who died was always eulogized by scholars in reams of Latin or even Greek verse and prose.

As the Egyptian of old was confronted at the festal board with a memorial of mortality, so was the Dogaressa of Venice warned, in the fifteenth century, at the supreme moment of her triumph, of the inevitable end. At her coronation, when she had passed in state through the gorgeous apartments of the palace and had come, at last, to her throne, she was solemnly addressed in these words: "Your Serenity is alive and has arrived to take possession of your palace; but heed and mark! When you shall be dead, your brains, your eyes and your bowels will be removed from your body,[2] and here, on this very spot, will you lie for three days and then be committed to the grave." The Dogaressa was expected to reply: "We are content to be informed of what shall happen according to the good pleasure of the Sovereignty of God".[3]

[1] *Perrens*, loc. cit., 402, note.

[2] In the process of embalming.

[3] *P. Molmenti*, La dogaressa di Venezia, Torino, 1884.

CHAPTER X

STIR, PERILS AND AMUSEMENTS OF LIFE.

THE chief amusement of women in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was to look out at window on the narrow, crooked alley, where the goodman of the house would perhaps be sitting gambling or playing chess with a neighbour, little moved by the interruption of some chance hit from an urchin's ball or some practical joke of a schoolboy, more daring than his fellows, or the horse-play or coarse jokes of passers-by. Now a horseman would pass along, his boots brushing the clothes of the wayfarer ;[1] now there would be a bout at fisticuffs or stone-throwing by a mob of little wretches.[2] And if a housewife set out for the market-place she might be startled by a rat suddenly let loose from a trap and chased, or be nearly knocked down by a ring of boisterous youngsters playing *coda* (a sort of "oranges and lemons"), or find herself confronted with a pair of angry dames scratching and tearing at each other, or she might observe convicted culprits of this order, women who could not pay the fine,[3] parading the piazza, with heavy weights round their necks or standing under the great

[1] *Sacchetti*, nov. cxiv.

[2] *Malavolti*, Historia, Venezia, 1599, II, 7.

[3] The authorities did all they could to "control the audacity of women"; the criminal archives are full of offences against the peace committed by women.

communal loggia to be jeered at.[1] Then, suddenly, there might be a cry of "accor uomo" and the clash of swords; she would flee for safety to the nearest friendly tower, past shopkeepers hastily putting up their shutters or dismantling their booths, and gambling merchants picking up their dice and running indoors to arm themselves.[2]

Never was life so full of clang and uproar as in a mediaeval town: music of itinerant musicians, perpetual howling of popular songs, chantings by religious confraternities, clash of countless church-bells, clatter of armourers riveting harness, brawlings of angry men, shrieks of frightened women, screechings of children, cackle of gossips, bawlings of hawkers, each with his own peculiar yell; universal whoop, clangour, din and vociferation swelled the chorus of people in love with noise.[3]

In the days of Guelf and Ghibelline, wives and daughters often heard the great bell toll, and watched, with beating hearts, armed husbands, fathers, brothers, following the city-standard set on the *caroccio*—the wagon drawn by oxen mantled with red cloth—often did it fall to them to greet a remnant returning from battle, jubilant with victory or enraged by defeat. And, during the absence of their men, the women of opposite factions were wont to insult each other by irritating party-signals—the wearing of some particular flower, some special way of cutting fruit, or some gesture of thumb or forefinger.

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 63. [2] *Sacchetti*, nov. clxv.

[3] *A. Graf*, Attraverso il cinquecento, p. 334 note 2; *J. Owen*, Skeptics of the Renaissance, 1893, pp. 46-51; *G. Biagi*, Private Life of the Florentines, Florence, 1896.

There was little personal liberty for men ; far less for women. Liberty was concentrated in the group of blood-relations, who gave every possible manifestation of freedom by their ingenious modes of falling on some rival family. What wives and mothers had to suffer! In 1311 the Guelfs of Bologna slew all male Ghibellines, even boys ; tore them limb from limb, and carried the pieces through the city. Orvieto was already almost depopulated and half the houses were in ruins by reason of feuds at the time when the plague reached it in 1348.[1] Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we have repeated accounts of the sudden outburst of blood-feuds ; women saw husbands, fathers, brothers, children fall, victims to political hatred or private revenge. Houses were sacked and burned and sometimes not a woman escaped.[2] Women took an active part in these blood-feuds, however. There exists many a record similar to that of Caterina Arcoloniani, who allured a nobleman to her husband's castle, where the family were lying in wait for him and despatched him with twelve dagger-thrusts.[3] They carried on vendetta with one another ; we even find a female servant solemnly swearing an eight days' truce with another woman before the *gastaldo*.[4] Even when the fifteenth century was no longer young, we find St. Bernardino lamenting the number of women murdered in party strife, ripped open, the children they had borne in their womb trampled on, their men-folk slain before their eyes. Women were so maddened that they often

[1] *G. Pardi*, Boll. della soc. Umbra, ii. 170.

[2] *G. Villani*, X, xxiv. [3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 257.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

armed their little boys to go forth and spare not, or turned to slay one another.[1] At the capture of the castle of Pordenone, in 1402, the *castellano*, his wife and daughters were burned to death.[2] Wives often saw their husbands banished, but were rarely obliged to share their exile; yet the women of Lucca were expelled by the Pisans.[3] But, if they accompanied their husbands, they were often welcomed by cities friendly to their cause,[4] and, if they remained at home, they were not molested: the cheerfulness and virtue of Giovanna, daughter of Nino of Gallura, induced the Florentine commune to grant her pecuniary aid. Sometimes in the internecine struggle of city with city the chastity of women was little respected in North Italy. When Facino Cane took Aquileia and Marano in the fourteenth century, even the sanctuary did not save them from violation. Many women, old as well as young, were carried off by mercenary troops. But when Italian troops were employed and big despots who had swallowed up small despots got more power, they ceased to spoil possible future possessions with the full force of fire and rapine. As centralized authority got stronger sway the cities became safer for women. We find fewer such records as that of a lord of the soil being fined for the attempted violation and robbery of a Milanese mercer's wife in a public way (A.D. 1300): such brutality had been common enough. Cutpurses were abroad, however; exiles too, who in the sixteenth century, owing to more regulated relations holding between bigger States, had few friendly

[1] *S. Bernardino*, Prediche volgare, I, 252 sqq.

[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 44. [3] *Matt. Villani*, II, xvi.

[4] *I. Del Lungo*, Dante ai tempi di Dante, p. 331.

neighbours to welcome them, turned banditti and infested the hills; sometimes strong bands would occupy the roads or raid small towns. Once, at least, in the fourteenth century, dozens were killed and thousands wounded during the festivities of Carnival.[1]

But this particular event happened in turbulent Siena, though at Perugia and certain other places, where the government was weak, vendetta was practised to a late period. On 16 July, 1500, Giovan Paolo Baglione of the last-named city, riding a black war-horse, called to the ladies of the place to pray for the success of his sword in the terrible internecine tragedies that were taking place between his house and the Oddi.[2] Perugia was always turbulent: when Arcimbold, Archbishop of Milan, was legate of Perugia he found a man who had cracked the heads of his enemy's children against a wall, cut the throat of the wife, who was pregnant, and, finding a child still alive, had nailed it, like vermin, to the wall of his house.[3] As late as 1596 a fight broke out at a dance at Cividale, and an unhappy lad who was wounded died in the arms of one of the lady-dancers;[4] and Montaigne, at the end of the sixteenth century, found the older parts of Bologna still disquieted by the feuds of ancient families, some of whom declared for the Spaniards and others for the French. But usually we do not find great commercial cities, like Florence,

[1] *Mengozzi-Lisini*, Frammenta di una cronachetta senese del secolo xiv. Siena, 1893.

[2] *Comte de Baglion de la Dufferie*, Les Baglioni de Pérouse, 1907, p. 100.

[3] *Ripamonti*, apud *Muratori*, R. I. S., vii. 667.

[4] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 391.

much disturbed by vendetta after the beginning of the fifteenth century. Then we read how our friend Luca da Panzano distinguished himself on behalf of his house: Podestà of a small town, that is to say, a magistrate chosen for the special purpose of putting down disorder, he got leave of absence from his post on the plea of ill-health, and, professing to be setting off to take mineral baths, he rode rapidly to Naples, cleverly tracked down and stabbed his man, and then, accompanied by his accomplices, fled to a certain Madonna Cercherelli, who, when she was informed of what had been done, gave the assassins shelter and rode part of the way home with them.[1] Yet vendetta (which had been introduced into the city by those unruly country families of barbarian descent whom the burghers wished both to master and to employ as defensive soldiery) was dying out rapidly in Luca's time, before the increase of commerce and the strengthening of rule. By the end of the fifteenth century the chief enemy of order in the great cities was the timid street thief—the product of commencing capitalism and the greed of the guilds—who often found an asylum among the down-trodden peasantry of the hills. During the fifteenth century Piacenza suffered the worst horrors of siege, but the sufferings of that city were quite exceptional. During the earlier years of the next century the foreign invaders made war in the old brutal fashion that had passed away under the almost bloodless tactics of the Italian mercenary troops. Who can read, without shuddering, the grim account of what happened at Rome, Capua, Prato, Modena, Milan, Siena? Peasants, no less than

[1] Arch. stor. it., S. V, iv.

burghers, suffered abominable things ; Guicciardini tells us of the calamitous sufferings of country-folk in 1508, when the Florentines devastated Pisan territory, and how the womankind of the foe died of hunger. Cities under military occupation endured bitter things : Piacenza complained that under Campeggio, the governor, matrons were strangled in their homes, women ravished, and factions revived.[1] Yet the atrocities committed by Cesare Borgia, when purged of the false charges of enemies to his house, pale before those of Guelf and Ghibelline and the unconsidered atrocities of everyday life in earlier times. But it must be acknowledged that the cataclysmic disturbance caused by the irruption of foreign armies, carrying on war with mediaeval ferocity, checked the social evolution that was in progress and allowed the brutal passions of a former period to burst forth again among the Italians. In 1511, we find the Savorgnaneschi, a party of Friulian nobles who were opposed to Venetian rule, surprising a festival held at a private house where ladies were singing and dancing ; they slew the men, stripped the women of their finery and made a bonfire of it.[2] The peasantry and lower ranks of labour, however, remained but little touched by social improvement throughout our whole period : the men and women of the *popolo basso* were ground down by landlords, fleeced by traders and tricked by rulers.

Even in the early days, when there was constant feud, there were short intervals of peace, and women and girls danced to music along the unpaved lanes on their way to the feast, with coronets of flowers on

[1] Arch. stor. it., App. vi. 18. [2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 391.

their brows. Life was exuberant in its joy, when its continuance was so specially uncertain. At carnival-time coarse songs fell on not unwelcome ears by day, and canticles were sung before the street shrines of Our Lady and the saints at nightfall.[1] Punch rejoiced the Neapolitan populace ; a jocose fellow, named Harlequin, was to be seen at Bergamo, and both Pantaloon (a ridiculous country-trader), and mountebanks were very popular. In Friuli, on May-morning, noble youths set out in cavalcade, decked in the young greenery of spring, and each cavalier gave a bough to the lady of his choice.[2] The Crusaders had learned the language of flowers in the East and brought it home ; in many places, the houses of young girls were adorned with flowers by their admirers, and Cibrario was of opinion that this custom may have given rise to the battle of flowers at the Carnival. The Carnival itself was a survival of the ancient Saturnalia, when slaves changed places with their masters and were exempt from punishment.[3] Pilgrims returning from the Holy Land, wearing their cockle-shell badge, were welcomed by women, who sat at their windows listening to them as they perambulated the streets singing ; and the clergy took a hint from their success and instituted sacred representations in the churches, then, as now, more frequented by women than by men. These were accompanied with music, dance and song, the intervals being, at first, occupied by the preacher : they became very

[1] *A. Capelli*, Poesi musicali dei sec. xiv.-xvi. Bologna, 1869 ; *Boccaccio*, v. nov. x.

[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 385.

[3] *J. C. Frazer*, Golden Bough, 1900, iii. 138-200.

YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY ASSEMBLED TOGETHER FOR MUSIC, CONVERSATION AND LOVE-MAKING

FROM A FRESCO, COMMONLY ATTRIBUTED TO ORCAGNA, IN THE CAMPO SANTO, PISA

popular, passed from Umbria, where they were first performed, to the Abruzzi, and soon spread over all Italy, increasing year by year in dramatic power and effect. At Siena we find, in 1360, that "first a little angel sang to announce the commencement of the festa; then angels sang praises from the choir, and soon afterwards musical instruments were heard, and then voices and instruments blended in full harmony".[1] Later these sacred representations were transferred to the streets; one saw the Wise Men of the East riding along them, or a pantomime of Heaven and Hell would be given in the public square; the sacred representations developed into miracle-plays and, finally, into genuine drama, performed in some chamber of the Prince's palace, fitted up as a theatre,[2] where courtly dames sat with as tolerant ears as the ladies of to-day have lenient eyes. After mass various companies were wont to parade the city singing hymns.

The Italians inherited from their Roman ancestors a passion for spectacle. Every saint's day all work was suspended. On the visit of any magnate, at the marriage of people of importance, on any and every excuse, the town was gratified by stately processions and given over to laughter, jesting and puerility. At Bologna, for example, on the day of St. Bartholomew (the patron-saint of the city) the cook of the *podestà* traversed the main streets in state, holding aloft the implements of his trade; there were horse-races along the streets for the *palio* (a fine cloth) and roast meats were thrown from the palace-windows to the gathered populace. At the feast of St. John

[1] *R. Marrocchi*, La musica in Siena, 1886, p. 44.

[2] *D'Ancona*, Origini del teatro it., Firenze, 1877.

at Florence, companies called of Love, Bacchus, Fortune, etc., sang and danced through the town and gave presents. At Siena, in the thirteenth century, fisticuffs commenced at the sound of a trumpet ; the magistrates joined in, and the conquerors pillaged the shops of the vanquished. Despots gave feasts to maintain their popularity : Can Grande of Verona celebrated the union of Padua with his own State by a whole month of rejoicing

The jousts of the North found their way into Italy, but chivalry never took root there, and memories of the arena altered the tournament. In 1332, knights fought against bulls in the Roman Colosseum before beautiful ladies and an elected queen. One combatant bore on his casque the legend, " I am Æneas for Lavinia," a lady with whom he was madly in love ; a widower bore weeds for his wife, and the legend, " I am inconsolable" ; another, " Who shall deliver us from Love's follies " ; another, " I am the slave of Roman Lucrezia " ; another clad himself in pale green " like a fainting woman," and yet another, dressed in scarlet, bore the legend, " An I drown in blood 'twere a sweet death". The knights saluted the ladies first, next bowed to the populace and then proceeded to attack the bulls, which disposed of twenty-seven of them, eighteen being killed.[1] Later, at the end of the fifteenth century, the Colosseum was partly converted into a series of chapels, where sacred representations were given,[2] and we owe what remains of it to this fact. In the fifteenth century, lions, bulls, bears and wild boars were set fighting at Florence, Ferrara, and

[1] Annali di *Lodovico Monaldesco*, apud *Muratori*, R. I. S., xii.

[2] *Arnald von Harff*, Pilgerfahrt, Köln, 1860.

other places.[1] But milder manners soon converted the dangerous tournament and joust of the rough North into an almost harmless breaking of lances. Even in 1314 we find squadrons assailing each other with sugar-pellets in the attack and defence of a Castle of Love, but they waxed fierce and were with difficulty prevented from indulging in a more serious engagement.[2] The Angevin and Spanish rulers at Naples reinforced all feudal usages ; yet we find Alfonso the Magnanimous and his consort, attired as angels, attacking Capuan devils in the public square ; after which a wooden elephant on wheels, with a tower, full of musicians, on its back, was dragged through the city.[3] Ladies were passionately fond of such spectacles, and the women of the people enjoyed them ; while, in the full Renaissance, great artists like Leonardo da Vinci lent their genius to the invention of mechanisms and the construction of splendours that would perhaps be found marvellous to-day.[4]

In the Middle Ages women crowded to church at Christmas-tide to gaze on the dear little Bambino in his manger, or the Flight into Egypt, and even the highly polished dames of the Renaissance took a strange delight in every sort of spectacle. Castiglione describes a morris-dance where a woman entreats kind Venus to send her a lover ; then eight hermits appear and seize and bind Cupid, who prays his mother to set him free. The goddess gives the lady a love-potion,

[1] *Strozzi*, Poetae, De leone Borsii ducis ; *Pii II.*, Commentarii, lib. ii.

[2] *Cibrario*, loc. cit., 388.

[3] *N. Valéry*, Curiosités et anecdotes italiennes, p. 150.

[4] *Amoretti*, Memorie di Leonardo da Vinci, Milano, 1804, p. 38.

which she administers to the hermits, and they are tickled with arrows by Cupid, who has recovered his bow, whereupon all the eight are transformed into dancing youths. The lady commands them to give proof of their valour; they fight, seven are slain, and the survivor wins the lady.[1]

The dames of the Renaissance devoted all the time they could spare to the chase, water-parties, the drama, musical entertainments, song, cards, gambling, and everything that would keep up perpetual gaiety and excitement: they never appear to have got weary. Above everything they loved dancing, as the means by which they could best display their personal grace. The dance underwent many changes: in Dante's time it was combined with song;[2] Boccaccio speaks of men and women alternately forming a circle and singing in chorus, following a master of ceremonies; then the master, leaving his place, takes with his left hand the left hand of a lady, saying "Give me this damsel," and, proceeding to the left, gathers all the ladies until they are collected on his left and the men on his right.[3] In the early part of the fifteenth century we find young girls dancing in the streets of Florence, wearing crowns of silk or silver;[4] and dances of grave character were in vogue, wherein the feet scarcely left the ground, as well as agile, graceful leapings. At the end of the century a maiden would sometimes dance a *pas seul*, and at Naples, allegorical dances, in which both ladies and gentlemen took part, were fashionable, but the

[1] Lettere inedite di *B. Castiglione*, Nozze Loria-Maroni, Mantova, 1861.

[2] Purg., xxxi. 131. [3] Decameron, viii. nov. 2.

[4] *Muratori*, loc. cit., xix. 970.

sexes never took hands. Professional dancers now appeared, and in the following century they were to be found everywhere. Most of the dancing-masters, as well as most of the musicians and comedians, were Jews; they composed many dances, from the *pas seul* up to a dance for six people, usually expressive of the accompanying song, but much was left to the taste and inventiveness of the dancer: in fact fine dancing was a triumph of art. Montaigne, when he visited Italy, was delighted to watch the peasants dancing, and declares they did it as gracefully as ladies in France. Of course attempts were made to regulate the amusement by the passage of sumptuary laws. At Macerata, in 1554, no woman was allowed to dance in any public place, even if accompanied by a man, except in the palace of the Priors; at Ancona dancing was prohibited everywhere, even in private houses, except on certain occasions.

Great ladies amused themselves by keeping jesters and breeding dwarfs, whom they exchanged with each other.[1] Card-playing soon became very popular: bearing the date 18 September, 1424, we find a request from Parisina Malatesta for "cards for our girls and send them at once".[2] Gambling was always a temptation to the Italian woman; even in 1362 we find the sumptuary laws of Lucca forbidding women to play at any game whatsoever whereby they may lose money,[3] and card-playing, especially *scartino* (a kind of écarté) became such a passion with the great dames of the Renaissance that, not infrequently, we find them

[1] *A. Luzio e R. Renier*, Mantova e Urbino.

[2] *C. Camponi*, Le carte di giuoco, Mantova, 1875.

[3] *Minutoli*, Arch. st. it., I, x. 105.

pawning jewels to pay their gambling debts. The cards of the period were unlike ours, having Scriptural and allegorical subjects or animals painted on them. At most games the sexes were separate ; but when they played together, it was always at some diversion that gave an opportunity for pretending courtship and for the display of coquetry : there were various forms of forfeits and a kind of "Russian Scandal".[1] And though, in the thirteenth century, Brunetto Latini tells us, in his Tesoro, that a man who gave light glances to a woman was regarded as a blackguard, and though rulers and burghers alike imbued their wives with a due sense of the advantages of virtue, there can be little doubt that many ladies found the greatest amusement in traffic of very private character, while those of correcter life indulged in the second-hand entertainment provided by the novelists ; these authors served up naughtiness that might lawfully be enjoyed because it was disembodied ; and though their tales appear gross as well as indecorous to us, the readers of those days were usually of Boccaccio's opinion that "nothing is so improper that it may not be told if it is politely wrapped up". Above all things were they interested in recitals concerning human life, whatever course its vital vigour might take.

In the thirteenth century Italian merchants journeyed much ; their wives but little. By the beginning of the fifteenth century travelling had become fairly safe ; we find Ser Lapo Mazzei setting forth from Prato, 27 June, 1400, and "by the grace of God" reaching

[1] *L. Zdekauer*, Il giuoco in Italia, Fir., 1886 ; *Bargagli*, Trattonimenti, Fir., 1587 ; *Toralto*, La veronica o del sonetto dialogo, Genova, 1581, p. 71.

Bologna two days later. The worthy notary led the way on a mule; then came his wife on a borrowed mule, "for the hire of which much had been paid," then came a friend of the family "on our horse with a riding-saddle," and lastly the servants and ladies of his household[1] There were few roads and those all bad. But the way was lively; there were men-at-arms abroad, seeking their fortunes, princesses going to be married, surrounded by their trains, families sent into exile, merchants riding with their bales guarded by armed servants, knights riding to some tournament, huntsmen with their falcons, men of learning, jurisconsults travelling to some law-court, courtiers seeking preferment, pilgrims, friars, beggars. It might be necessary to turn aside to avoid some band of mercenary soldiers—a whole state in motion, with scholars within hail of the captain to write his dispatches in choice Latin, warriors of all nations and traders, harlots and jugglers in the wake. The roads grew gayer and safer as the century progressed. There was the glitter of whole courts going to pay a visit, or of ambassadors travelling to and fro, all in cloth of gold and silver, and many ladies, sitting behind their husbands on pillions (for posting was developed and a fresh horse could be procured at an inn). Sometimes a litter would be seen with some great lady lying on it, drawn by mules, but never a carriage, for the roads were mere horse-tracks. Beatrice of Provence indeed entered the city of Naples, seated in some approach to a carriage covered with velvet,[2] and Caterina

[1] *C. Guasti*, Ser Lapo Mazzei, Lettere di un notaro, Fir. 1880.

[2] Giornale Napolitane dall' anno 1266-1478; *Muratori*, loc. cit., xxi.

Sforza, being pregnant, was in a sort of carriage when her husband was set upon and murdered (1495), but the comfort of the cumbrous coach was brought to Italy from Hungary by Cardinal Ippolyto d' Este in 1509.[1] And in the early part of the same century we read that in the broad, well-paved streets of Milan "there are so many superb carriages, ornamented with the finest gilding and carved so richly, drawn each by four magnificent horses (for there are sixty there of four horses and an incredible number with two, with the richest coverings of silk and gold-pinking of various designs) so that, when the ladies take the air in the country it is like a Roman triumph."[2] In 1534 "they began to use chariots in Florence, which had never been seen there before, and the first to do so was the Marchesa of Massa".[3] By 1602 not a Genoese lady went a journey, though never so short a one, except in a sedan-chair, covered with felt or leather, usually of a red colour.[4] Glass windows were not then used, but Montaigne,[5] towards the end of the sixteenth century, found glass reflectors fashionable, so that the traveller could see all round her.

When the stronger States had conquered and absorbed the smaller, and wealth abounded, streets were paved and broadened, fountains played in the squares,

[1] *Burckhardt*, Cultur d. Renaissance, ed. L. Geiger, 1908, exkurse lxxxviii.

[2] *Bandello*, I, nov. 9.

[3] Croniche della città di Firenze, quoted by *Ferrai*, Lorenzino de' Medici e la società cortigiana del cinquecento, Milano, 1891, p. 156.

[4] *Bartolomeo Paschetti*, Del conservare la sanità e del vivere del Genovesi, 1602, p. 172.

[5] *M. de Montaigne*, Journal du voyage.

and splendid fêtes overflowed from the small palace into both street and piazza. Venice began to pave her narrow alleys as early as the reign of the Doge Renier (1253-68). Public clocks were erected first at Padua, and then at Milan ; and, by the sixteenth century, some streets even bore directions for the guidance of the stranger ;[1] while Ferrara had acquired the look of a modern city and, therefore, became the fashionable abode of wealthy strangers. But the fortified villages, copies of the mediaeval town, remained unaltered, unvisited and poverty-stricken, only enlivened, as of yore, by the contests of improvisatori. Sometimes a street of some important place would be packed with the entire population come out to see a princely bride pass along : it would be festooned with flowers and greenery, and the houses would have rich hangings of tapestry or cloth of gold. More unusual was the advent of such far-off people as Japanese, who came to Bologna and Perugia in 1585,[2] or converted Spanish Moors, announced by trumpet, and accompanied by strange monks with long hair and great beards, marching in single file and selling pardons to raise money for warring on the infidel Turk.[3] More commonly an influx of folk from the country-side came to see processions of priests and singing angels, bearing the relics of saints, or the jousts and plays that were given in the piazza, followed by music and dancing in which everybody joined.

Ladies thought little of long journeys, though they endured much discomfort from snow, rough passes, and failure of provisions, and sometimes there was not

[1] Cantù, Storia degli Ital., 1876, X, 303.

[2] Boll. della R. dep. per Umbra, X, 485.

[3] *Ibid.*, IX, 173.

a little danger in crossing a swollen torrent. Elizabetta Gonzaga could hardly find a dry spot in her bed at the Podestà's house at Ravenna; for the rain came through the roof; and she nearly lost her life in an Apennine stream. Maria of Savoy left Genoa, 6 September, 1428, and did not arrive at Milan until 8 October; it took Renée of France three months to travel from Paris to Ferrara in 1528; but of course a little time was taken up by the fêtes given by hospitable cities on the way. Short journeys were taken on horseback, but long and difficult journeys in a litter. When Amadeo V accompanied the Emperor Henry VII to Rome in 1310 he took his wife with him as far as Genoa, lying in a litter.[1]

Yet, in spite of obstacle and peril, the love of travel was very great, and pilgrimage furnished an excuse for a welcome change. At the first Jubilee, A.D. 1300, a pilgrim says, "I was there, and stayed fifteen days . . . Inns were very dear, so that my bed and straw and oats for my horses cost me a big tournois. Going out from Rome on Christmas Eve I saw a multitude, such as no man might count, and the Romans say there were 20,000 men and women. Often I saw both men and women trampled under foot, and several times I barely escaped the same fate."[2] We must not forget that our own Wife of Bath had been thrice to the Holy Land, and though Italian women were usually less adventurous, they visited Italian shrines, Rome and Compostella. Indeed women accomplished an incredible amount of travel in quite early times.

The antique Roman practice of using mineral baths

[1] *Cibrario*, loc. cit., ii. 91.

[2] *Ventura*, Chron. Ast., cap. xxii. apud *Muratori*, loc. cit., xi.

was never abandoned, and women as well as men flocked to St. Elena, Lucca, Petrioli and other renowned resorts. There were lodging-houses at these places, rooms for dry heat, douches, and separate bathing arrangements for women. Of course, in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the almost incessant warfare between small neighbouring communes interfered much with pilgrimage and visits to the baths, and, even in the fifteenth, mercenary bands often gave excitement to a journey. "I am most eager to be with you, but one must travel with the greatest care," wrote Pascoli of Imola to his wife, 15 February, 1501; "this very night a young and beautiful lady, the wife of a Venetian captain, who left him to go to the district between Cervia and Ravenna, has been carried off and her attendants slain." [1] The long series of invasions rendered many parts of Italy almost impassable to women, and since the larger and better policed States of the sixteenth century still bestowed their *mauvais sujets* on their neighbours, who no longer welcomed the exiles with open arms, the banished men either hired themselves as secret agents to do murder that could not now be openly contrived, or took to the hills and preyed on the wayfarer. Montaigne tells us that the roads were haunted by thieves at the end of the sixteenth century, and Tasso found the way from Naples to Rome blocked by a huge organized band of plunderers.

[1] *C. Alvisi*, Cesare Borgia, Imola, 1878, p. 162.

CHAPTER XI

DRESS AND ADORNMENT

WE learn from Giovanni Villani's chronicle that, in the twelfth century, Florentine ladies wore scarlet skirts of ypres or cambric with belts and hooded mantles lined with vair, while the women of the people dressed in coarse green cloth of Cambrai, of the same pattern as that worn by the lady.[1] Musso gives a similar account of the women of Piacenza.[2] Alda Burone, a Genoese who died in the twelfth century, left behind her a corsage, an undervest and a dimity gown with sleeves (the sleeve was always a separate article of clothing and was always separately mentioned). As early as 1240 Cardinal Latino issued a prohibition to the ladies of Lombardy, Tuscany and Romagna to affect long trains ; nor, when we think of the condition of a mediaeval street, shall we severely blame him, though Salimbene records that a woman confided to him that her tail was dearer to her than all the rest of her dress. But Latino also ordered the wearing of veils, whereupon such a diaphanous quality came into fashion that the Minorite brother tells us killing glances were only enhanced thereby.[3] Every Genoese woman covered her head with a veil, in due

[1] *G. Villani*, Cronica Firenze, 1823.

[2] *Johan de Mussis*, apud *Muratori*, loc. cit., xvi. (Chron. Placent.).

[3] Chronica fr. *Salimbene Parmensis*, ex. cod. Bibl. Vat., Parmae, 1857.

submission to the directions of the preaching friars, and, even a century later, the fashion prevailed. In Venice from the seventh to the eighteenth centuries both women and girls kept the face covered, the maiden wearing a white silk veil, which it ill betided the prostitute to copy, and the matron rejoiced in a great sleeveless mantle. The dress of women, both in Genoa and Venice, was influenced by Oriental habits, by reason of the Levantine commerce of those cities, and, in Southern Italy, Arabic costumes were copied.[1] Yet Venetian ladies always wore short bodices, exposing the bosom, and Dante blames the brazen-faced Florentine women of his time for their readiness to go abroad "mostrando con le poppe il petto";[2] but in his day they wore a white nun-like wimple.[3] Women were their own dressmakers.[4] At Faenza the hair was gathered within nets of gold and silver thread; the neck was displayed; the bodice was ornamented with gold; the skirt was of crimson or peacock-blue; the sleeves were open, hanging down as far as the middle of the leg and slung over the shoulder; the arms were bare, painted white, and bracelets with charms were worn on them.[5] In 1294 we find that a Bolognese lady who lived in the country was robbed of a scarlet gown with silver buckles, a scarlet robe trimmed with vair and provided with silver buttons and eyelets, and a scarlet hood trimmed with taffeta.[6] The Italian

[1] *Muratori*, loc. cit., x. 934.

[2] Purg., xxiii. 98-111.

[3] Purg., viii. 74.

[4] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 363.

[5] *G. Zucculo*, Atti e mem. della R. dep. per le prov. Rom., Anno II, 168.

[6] *Mazzoni-Toselli*, Storia del archiv. crim. is full of valuable facts concerning dress and ornaments.

woman began to display her passionate love of jewellery, and already there was plenty of it.[1] Coronets of gold and pearls were worn by the rich, imitations by the poor, and even the peasants began to ape the fashions of the town. In Naples we find gold combs in use in 1296, and everything shows that manners and customs were not different here from elsewhere in Italy.[2] Nightgear was unknown, everybody went to bed naked, and the poor did so even at the close of our period; chemises were rare, for linen was costly, but linen collars were in use.[3] The legs were bandaged or left bare; silk stockings were very rare, even in the sixteenth century, and knitted stockings were not used; we find poets, like Mottense and Strassaldo, singing the charms of barefooted nymphs whose "white naked feet" and "pure white columns of alabaster" could be seen when they chanced to raise the dress. Every attention was given to personal appearance and very little heed to personal comfort throughout our period.

Often Italian beauty is not of enduring character, and artifice was used to disguise natural defects or the ravages of time. Fair hair was alone admired, and artifice, even in Roman times, was employed to secure that colour: "sed nigrum flavo crinem abscondente galero," wrote Juvenal. Barberino speaks of dyes for the hair and of exposing it to the rays of the moon to blanch it. The Roman arts of painting and enamelling had never been lost, white lead being chiefly used

[1] *L. Zdekauer*, Boll. sen., vi. 520 (I goielle d'una gentildonna senese del dugento).

[2] *R. Bevere*, Notizie Storiche tratti degli Arche, xxi, 702 *sqq.*

[3] *Cibrario*, loc. cit., 222.

A BEAUTY OF THE MILANESE COURT (LUCREZIA CRIVELLI) AT THE CLOSE OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, STILL WEARING THE "CYPRIAN" FILLET

ATTRIBUTED TO LEONARDO DA VINCI

Louvre, Paris

for this purpose, and Dante mentions by name "that exceptional dame who came from her mirror with unpainted face".[1]

At the beginning of the fourteenth century we find ladies wearing dresses of many colours, embroidered or painted with flowers, birds, dragons, mottoes and, later, even musical notes. Thirteen years before the commencement of this century we hear of a lady of Ferrara being robbed of a perse-coloured gown, adorned with forty silver buttons to the body and twenty ditto to the sleeves: this passion for buttons continued to grow, until a great dame was as proud of the multitude she wore as the East-End coster is to-day. In 1336 a lady's woollen robe was stolen, and it is described as being of French fashion, pointing to an influence of foreign commerce on dress. An invidious distinction of classes was made in the sumptuary edicts, showing that the poorer classes tried to ape the folk financially above them. Sacchetti gives amusing instances of the clever dodges of women to evade these obnoxious edicts. At Bologna, Pescia, and elsewhere all dresses had to be submitted to the authorities and sealed with a leaden *bolla;* in 1343 the Florentine government had to employ foreigners to carry out this unpopular measure. Ladies induced a visitor, the Duchess of Calabria, to petition for the sanctioning of a yellow silk-band to be worn across the forehead—"an immodest, unnatural ornament," Villani calls it. During the despotism of the Duke of Athens at Florence (1342-3) foreign and expensive fancies were copied, and we find inventories of robes, mantles, capes, etc., of silk, dyed azure, scarlet,

[1] Par., xv. 113.

blood-red, white and green, with endless inventions in their decorations and embroidery.[1] Sacchetti tells us that the most skilful painters and sculptors count as nothing against women, "neither their faces nor their limbs remain as God made them," and as to dresses we learn that "some have them cut low enough to show the armpit; then, in a jump, their collars stick above their ears. Girls that once went about in a modest way have cut their hoods down to a cap now, and wear a collar with all sorts of little beasts dangling down into their bosoms. As for sleeves, they are as fat as mattresses. Was anything more destructive or useless ever invented? Can a woman lift a glass with these things on or remove anything from the table without soiling both sleeves and tablecloth, not to speak of upsetting the vessels? They squeeze their waists in, too, cover their arms with their tails and their throats with their hoods. But to talk about these women, beginning with the train, is never to come to an end. Then they pile their hair high enough to reach the roof. Some curl it, some plaster it down, others powder it: it is enough to make one sick."

In 1324 we read of wigs made with great tresses of white and yellow silk, "and thus the unregulated fancy of women overcomes the reason and wisdom of men".[2] Later on, real hair, cut from the dead, was used, and in 1587 we find this practice forbidden at Lucca. False teeth of ivory were worn,[3] but the failing sight of the aged was not relieved by spectacles before the sixteenth century.

[1] *P. d'Ancona*, Le vesti delle donne fiorentine nel sec. XIV. Nozze Ferrari-Toniolo, Pisa, 1906.

[2] G. Villani, loc. cit. x. 11. [3] *Boccaccio*, De vir. ill., cap. xviii.

In the fifteenth century each little State had its prevailing mode, but every lady could gratify her own caprice as to attire, and was little restrained by convention. In 1425 we find a bride with two dresses, one of silk, trimmed with gold, and valued at 100 gold florins, and the other of cloth, embroidered with little flowers in silk and gold, valued at seventy-five florins[1]—very considerable sums. A lady of Siena possessed figured velvet headgear, great ermine-lined sleeves, a bodice of figured crimson velvet with little sleeves, a frill with red lining, a skirt of crimson velvet with red figures and brocaded sleeves, and a girdle of elaborate device, of crimson brocade and gold and a silk fringe.[2] A lady of Pescia possessed, in 1486, headdresses of gold with silver ornaments and embroidery, a fine embroidered bodice with separate sleeves (probably of a different colour), petticoats, with sleeves of Alexandrian satin and green Florentine material, scarlet waistbelts fringed after the Venetian style, or of damascened silver, with white or green linings, cloth caps set off by silver scales, red shoes, coloured hose and slippers of peacock-blue cloth.[3] Sometimes a family would adopt some distinctive mark, such as a red right shoe and a white and blue left shoe.[4] Primitive colours were almost invariably preferred. Palmieri, writing in the middle of the century,[5] complains of the luxury and absurdity of

[1] *M. Valéry*, Curiosités et anecdotes italiennes, 1842, pp. 178, 179.

[2] *E. Casanova*, Boll. sen., viii. 42.

[3] *Stiavelli*, loc. cit., p. 182.

[4] *Frati*, La vita privata di Bologna, pp. 41, 42.

[5] *Palmieri*, Vita Civile.

feminine vanity, just as Sacchetti did a century before; he declares that women copy prostitutes in their style. Fra Bernardino, in the early part of the century, and Savonarola, at the end of it, inveigh against feminine extravagance; "O women, who provoke God by your spendthrift way," thunders the former, "by the unspeakable length of your trains, by your painted faces, your unseemly behaviour in holy places, your immodesty," etc., etc. Both reformers had scaffolds erected, surmounted by a figure of the devil, and upon these converts flung their valuables and trumperies for burning, but, alas! the change of heart "lasted but a short while"—so a devout puritan of Florence wrote concerning the effect of Savonarola's preaching, and probably the ultimate unpopularity of that reformer was, in part, attributable to his bonfires. The severe edict of Cardinal Bessarion at Bologna, in the middle of the century, caused what almost amounted to a rebellion of the women there.

A knife, silver scissors, and an embroidered case for pins were usually carried, suspended to a belt of silver, leather or silk. Turbans and all kinds of monstrous headgear were in vogue,[1] and held their ground for two hundred years. Probably female extravagance in dress had something to do with the growing reluctance of men to marry: we read of a married woman "who carried all her dower on her back".[2] Even the wife of a carver was provided with a chemise, three gowns, and three pairs of sleeves with silver trimmings,[3] while in high circles there was the

[1] See No. 25, Picture-gallery, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

[2] *C. Guasti*, Lettere di una gentildonna, No. 65, p. 548.

[3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 368.

most vulgar ostentation. Cattaneo, writing of the numerous rich bridal dresses of Lucrezia Borgia, says that "more gold has been used up at Rome and Naples in the last few weeks than is usually needed in a century". Even in the fourteenth century we find the ladies of Piacenza rejoicing in massive crowns of precious metal, triple pearl-diadems, veils broidered with pearls and hair-nets of gold and silver set with pearls, gold and amber necklaces, rich adornments called Cyprian "and not inaptly named";[1] but in the fifteenth century a fortune was often expended on a single ruby or a pearl of great price. Towards the end of the century women would pass three hours before the glass when they ought to have been attending to domestic duties,[2] Lucrezia Borgia was wont to pass a whole day in dressing, so as to outshine other ladies, and she and other noble dames would lose a day on a journey to attend to their hair. Barberino had advised that ointments should be used sparingly, especially in hot weather,[3] but now, out of over 500 recipes collected by Caterina Sforza, a full third are for plasters, washes and magical charms for the complexion, intermingled with poisons and prescriptions for procuring abortion.[4] She recommends, to preserve beauty, washing in the milk of a woman suckling a male child, and the distillation of a whole dove with its feathers, prepared with incantation. Some degree of personal cleanliness was introduced by the Crusaders; in the middle of the fifteenth

[1] *Johan de Mussis*, apud *Muratori*, loc. cit., xvi.

[2] See the abusive work entitled Malizie delle donne.

[3] Del reggimento e dei costumi delle dame.

[4] *Pasolini*, Caterina Sforza, iii. appendice.

century Poliziano complimented a girl on washing her face daily ; by the end of the century great ladies had their daily scented bath while music was played to them.[1] Venetian ladies were wont to sit on the roof, wearing a *solana*, or crownless hat, to blanch their hair in the sun, a very ancient practice ; but now more time than ever was given to the care of the hair throughout Italy.

Indeed in the latter half of the sixteenth century Florentine ladies gave up the whole morning to washing and curling their hair,[2] copying their rivals the fashionable courtesans, who paid the greatest attention to the proper display of fair locks : in the Archivio di Stato of Rome, we find that when the courtesan was asked concerning the disposal of her time she would reply, " In washing my head," a euphemism for dyeing the hair. The author is inclined to believe that the courtesan had much to do with instituting rudimentary notions of personal cleanliness, as also in stimulating her more fortunate sister to vie with her in dress and mental cultivation, for, as we shall see, in personal charm and intellectual attainments she was usually a remarkable person. We find ladies using vine-water, bean-water, rosemary, verjuice, verdigris, " oil of talc," and sublimates for washes and baths, and, according to the anonymous author of the Pelatina, they adopted an Eastern custom, rendering the body glabrous by means of razor and scissors. Still, there remained much to be desired in the matter of ablution ; we read of a lady that " her face is dainty enough, but as

[1] *G. Bertoni*, La bibl. estense, p. 19.

[2] *V. Giraldi*, Di certe usanze delle gentildonne fiorentine, Fir. 1890.

to the rest of her, heaven save us!" and disagreeable details follow of ingrained filth and malodorous discharge from skin rendered raw by the over-use of unguents. The first books on the toilet were now published.[1] The armamentaria of a Venetian lady appear to have consisted of a cheval-glass, a comb-holder, brush, an instrument for parting the hair, a cape to put on while dressing, a vessel for burning perfumes, a sponge bowl, and vessels for perfumes and pomades.[2]

In spite of foreign invasion and occupation, luxury increased. "What shall we say," asks an author, "of the magnificence of the ladies of Milan, their dresses covered with wrought gold, so many trimmings, embroideries, laces and precious jewels, so that when a dame goes forth from her door it reminds one of the 'Ascension' at Venice?"[3] German, French, and Spanish styles were copied; the open breast is spoken of by Il Pecorone as an English fashion. Fashion, in a word, began to prevail over individual taste, though women still wore garments of many colours. At Venice black was preferred at the close of the century, to show off the white skin.[4] A step was taken by Duke Cosimo I of Tuscany towards the encouragement of trade, which sumptuary law hindered: goods produced in Florence might be used freely by both sexes alike, "because if God makes a man and his spouse one We see not why the laws should treat them differently and set up strife and trouble,

[1] *Monnelli*, Gli ornamenti delle donne.

[2] *Ludwig*, Venezianischer Haustrat., 1906, p. 263.

[3] *Bandello*, I, nov. 9.

[4] *Sansovino*, Venezia descritta, 1604, p. 269.

which matrimony brings quite too often without this ".[1]

Throughout our entire period children were dressed quite simply, but in precisely the same fashion as their parents, of whom they looked like duodecimo editions. During days of fast the greatest lady divested herself of her finery and set out, in humble attire and often barefoot, to worship at some shrine.

Before the streets of Venice were paved (in the thirteenth century) ladies went through the mud and filth on pattens; the custom was retained, and, in spite of sumptuary laws the patten became heightened until courtesans and women of rank stood on false feet half a yard high in the sixteenth century. They were unable to walk without the support of one or two gentlemen or servants. The fashion, set by *hetairai*, was imitated by matrons, and all women vied with each other in appearing as tall as possible: statutes were passed in vain. Cornelio Frangipane might have saved his breath when, in 1557, he told women that their comeliness does not depend on artifice: they made themselves grotesque figures to overtop and confound one another, and men encouraged the competition in tallness because women on false feet had to be attended and were less likely to make assignations.[2]

[1] *Carnesecchi*, Cosimo I e la sua legge suntuaria del 1562, Fir., 1902, pp. 9, 10.

[2] *H. F. Brown*, Studies in the Hist. of Venice, 1907, I, 25, note i.

CHAPTER XII

RELIGION, SUPERSTITION AND DEEDS OF PIETY

LIFE during the Middle Ages was set to religion; the future life was of supreme importance, and the note thus struck continued to reverberate throughout the Renaissance, though in diminished volume and intensity. Religion vied with domestic duty for the chief place in the daily interest and concern of the burgher's wife. In the earlier part of our period there were female hermits who dwelt in huts furnished with a small barred window; they commanded much respect and were loaded with considerable gifts. In the fifteenth century we find Lucrezia Tornabuoni composing lauds on the Life of the Virgin, the Life of St. John the Baptist, the History of Judith and that of Tobias. Women were always eager for religious reform; they took an active part in the propagandism of San Bernardino and Savonarola; many, in the sixteenth century, inclined towards the Reformation; Vittoria Colonna and the beautiful Giulia Gonzaga were eager for the purification of the Church. Pius II remarked, with his wonted irony (1460), that "it is the nature of women to be more religious than men, and they are more favourable to priests".[1] Women flocked into those third orders of St. Francis

[1] Comment., lib. IV.

and St. Dominic, which allowed them to live in the world but enabled them to share in certain prayers and offices at the convents : members of the third orders vowed to live peaceably and simply, to receive the sacrament regularly, to visit the sick, to pray for the dead and to accompany them to their last resting-place.[1] Famous preachers drew huge congregations of women. When Savonarola, forbidden to preach at the Duomo, tried to exclude women on account of the limited accommodation of S. Marco, their protest was so earnest that he was obliged to reserve one day in the week for them, and so great was their enthusiasm that when Fra Domenico preached in the Duomo, 28 March, 1498, a multitude of them arose shouting that they all deserved to undergo the ordeal.[2] But however ready wives might be to go to church, it was very often difficult for them, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, to drag husbands thither, and artisans hardly went at all.[3]

Mediaeval men and women were usually undisciplined and incapable of self-control ; their emotions were unstable and explosive ; their passions flared wildly in excesses of vice ; their repentance took the form of religious intoxication.

Flagellation had been employed by the Church as a discipline, and, in the eleventh century, Cardinal Peter Damian set an example which spiritual fear and pestilence and incessant warfare incited men and women to follow : two centuries later we find organised con-

[1] *Wetzer* und *Welte*, Kirchenlexikon, Freiburg im Br., 1882, sqq., X, 740.

[2] *H. Lucas*, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, 1899, pp. 287, 333.

[3] *F. T. Perrens*, La Civilization Florentine, 1892, p. 101.

fraternities of penitents lashing themselves for their sins. The monk of Padua tells us that, in 1260, both sexes crowded the streets in procession, whipping themselves till they "drew blood from their tortured bodies, singing penitential psalms all the time and crying aloud to God for His mercy". In 1373 a chronicler records that the streets of Florence were filled by day and the churches by night with crowds of revivalists—"men, women and children without number—even children of ten years,—certainly more than 5000, all beating themselves in a general procession, besides 20,000 or more that followed".[1] In 1399, 5000 men, women and children, dressed in penitential white, perambulated throughout Italy: we learn that they reached Genoa 5 July, and stayed there nine days, teaching the *Stabat Mater* and reconciling enemies.[2] Flagellantism ultimately produced scenes of such disorder that the Church had to suppress it. In the fifteenth century we hear less of these white penitents and flagellants, though in 1456, after plague and earthquake in Apulia, youths and maidens formed flagellating processions.

But with the decline of this form of religious vehemence, revivalist preachers came to the front and produced a poignant (but ordinarily far from lasting) effect on men and still more on women. They delivered lengthy but plain and direct homilies, sometimes interspersed with such passages of terrorism, delivered so dramatically, that the cultured Politian confesses that his hair stood on end as he listened. The preacher often enhanced the effect of his word by

[1] *N. Rodolico*, La democrazia fiorentina, 1905, p. 51.

[2] *Georgio Stella*, apud *Muratori*, loc. cit. xvii.

the exhibition of *tableaux vivants* of terrific realism, and the convulsive sobs of women and even of men would fill the church. The immediate effect of these "revivals" was that strong family enmities were subdued for awhile, debtors were released from jail, and vanities, such as musical instruments, and noble pictures, if they were not of a religious character, were cast into the flames. At the end of the fifteenth century, Savonarola, the most famous of these missionary zealots, finding himself at bay with Pope Alexander VI, engineered his following of women and children into a political force, ordering them to besiege the government of Florence with his message [1]; he organized bands of precocious juvenile pietists, who went from door to door demanding the surrender of all false hair, jewels, and every frivolous instrument of amusement; women shrieked down his adversaries in the churches, and their children threatened to stone them.[2] Such despotic and meticulous interference could end in nothing but reaction, and it brought ruin to the great preacher. As late as 1516 a friar, who declared that his advent had been foretold and that he was sent to save the world, was followed in Rome by thousands; but his zeal led him to speak of the Roman Church as the Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse, and, before long, he meditated in silence behind the stout walls of S. Angelo.

A want of mental balance was demonstrated in another kind of manifestation in Southern Italy in the fifteenth century. Perotti tells us that folk bitten by

[1] *Savonarola*, Opera, Prato, 1845; Sermoni e prediche (serm., 15 May, 1496).

[2] *Sanuto*, loc. cit., I., 79.

the harmless *tarantula* dropped into melancholy and appeared to be stupefied ; but many at the sound of music would arouse themselves and dance till they fell to the ground, exhausted ; some pined away for desire unsatisfied, and with others there was morbid amatory excitement. This disease spread to the gipsies and crossed the Adriatic to Albania.

The century most marked by intellectual and moral ferment was the thirteenth. Since all the sciences were then but little developed and were regarded as mere handmaidens of theology, all the social upstirrings developed by the discontent and mental activity of the age assumed a religious guise. Following the mutiny of the burghers against the nobles came a less successful movement of the poor workers against their rich and oppressive masters : the poor awoke in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the contrast between a wealthy worldly Church, exercising feudal despotism and in league with Mammon, and its professions of Christian humility. The doctrines of Manichæism were revived, and many, if not most, heresies adopted crude communistic tenets under the excuse of a return to primitive Christian teaching and usage. The promptings of the insurgent flesh and the difficulty of excepting sex-relations from joint possession, as well as the problems presented by the family, inclined these Christians, who professed the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, either towards promiscuity on the one side or the repudiation of the sexual instinct as wholly a work of the Devil.[1] Freedom of the Spirit was proclaimed, but there was far from being freedom of

[1] *C. Kautsky*, Communism in Central Europe, tr. J. L. and E. G. Mulliken, 1897.

thought; for men and women had only escaped from the close grip of one body of doctrine to fall into that of another. The great democratic movement instituted by St. Francis was cleverly diverted by the Papacy to its own uses, and we find a strange alliance taking place between those propertied classes who called themselves Ghibellines and were the political opponents of the Pope and the Pope's Franciscan supporters: they aided each other in the persecution of these heretics. Thousands of men and women paid with their lives for the crime of holding independent opinions. Heresies were most common in the days when the overthrow of the feudal oppressor by the trader inspired the worker with a spirit of revolt against both the master who employed him and the wealthy prelate who made religion a mask for his own unconquerable worldliness. But by the end of the first quarter of the fourteenth century the allied Church and World were triumphant and remorseless: even latitudinarian women were dragged from their hiding places in the Roman Campagna.[1] Yet heresies lingered on and, from time to time, heretics, both men and women, were captured and disposed of by the long, searching arm of the Mediaeval Inquisition. They were chiefly poor people: the comfortable burgher and his wife found their solace in worldly gear and orthodox piety.

The friars, the favourite spiritual counsellors of women, are severely handled by the novelists from Boccaccio downwards, especially in their relations with their devotees. The Satirists always represent them as salacious, gluttonous, ignorant and hypocritical.

[1] *L. Fiumi*, Eretici e ribelli, Boll. Soc. Umbria, vi. 205 sqq.

Even in the sixteenth century we find Castiglione choosing a friar to enact the part of buffoon in the *Cortigiano*, and in 1543 the friars are spoken of as having "each of them a dozen female devotees to gorge him full".[1] The persistence of envenomed attack on the minor orders is remarkable, because few monks kept their vows, or secular priests their obligations. It would be impossible to maintain that concubinage was not the rule with nearly the whole priesthood until a generation or two had passed after the sittings at Trent ; and less respectable connexions than that of concubinage were equally common. The Patriarch Bertaldo of Aquileia was obliged to order his clergy to confess women solely in some place open to all observers ; in the fourteenth century the priests at Udine urged that they only kept female cooks, but some of them owned they had concubines and children.[2] The ecclesiastical authorities were early compelled by the communes to protect women against seduction and rape by priests and to put down the procuring of abortion by tonsured lovers : they were obliged to make ecclesiastical statutes conform to civil laws.[3] Proofs of the thesis that, taken as a whole, the clergy were a corrupt body, might be given almost without end. Why, then, this hatred of the mendicant orders? Why should they have been specially selected for contumely and ridicule?

In the first place these orders arose in democratic movements with professions of poverty. Especially democratic and communistic was that instituted by

[1] *Antonfrancesco Dati*, Lettere, 1552, p. 7.

[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 207.

[3] *L. Zdekauer*, Boll. senese, vii. 248-50.

St. Francis. Michele da Cesena, General of the Order, caused a capitular gathering to be held at Perugia in 1322, and there the renunciation of property, if not held in common, was pronounced to be Christ-like and desirable.[1] And though, soon, most Franciscan friars began to lust after wealth, some humble brothers still held to the principles on which their order was founded and had intimate relations with the discontented, hungry, suffering workers of both sexes. Their perpetual begging, too, was a nuisance to merchants who preferred to save any superfluity of wealth for the erection of princely and enduring monuments to their own benevolence and public spirit. Again, the friars were chiefly recruited from the despised classes; and some of them were zealots, far too inconveniently eager and sincere to be acceptable to lax, easy-going citizens: they preached principles which reproved the privileges enjoyed by the ruling classes and the luxurious lives of traders who heaped up earthly treasures by wringing the heart's blood out of the hopeless worker (the burgher had not even the excuse of the warrior-caste that he defended the city and was therefore entitled to privilege). It must not be imagined that because such notions were inchoate and inarticulate they were not felt: they did not always take a religious disguise, even—as the insurrections of the wool-workers at Siena and Florence testify. The zeal and sincerity of friars won the heart of the burgher's wife; she eagerly sought some mendicant brother to be her confessor and adviser; she told him her story, and revealed the secrets of her family-life; he took the pious woman's side against a domineering

[1] *F. Tocco*, L'eresia nel medio evo, 1884, p. 522.

or faithless husband; his knowledge of private affairs became too intimate, and he obtained an inconvenient control over the household; not infrequently the friar was at the bottom of domestic disputes. And many friars were skilled in wheedling ducats out of the widow's purse; many succumbed to temptations that arose when, pitiable victims of an unnatural vow, they were entrusted with perilous secrets; many were not slow to take any advantage they could of widow, wife, and maid. All these causes produced bitter hatred. Gino Capponi calls priests the scum of the world; but the more wealthy and more ancient orders were quite comfortably established and enjoyed the advantage of prestige; they constituted a refuge for the younger sons of families of quality or wealth; they manifested no perplexing zeal, and, therefore, they were usually let alone or but lightly scourged. Moreover, the older orders chose remote, secluded sites for their monasteries, while the friars established themselves in the heart of cities, where misdeeds soon became notorious and, perhaps, magnified.

With the increase of wealth and power and the enjoyment these brought, as well as in the enlightenment that began with the revival of ancient learning, religion ceased, with many women, to be the main object of their thought. Less and less, with most people in fact, did the future life occupy the central point of interest, though we know from Bisticci how many heavenly minded women were to be found among the wives of citizens and how minutely devout they were. But such ladies as Alessandra Macinghi do not write much about theological matters in the fifteenth century; in the sixteenth century women are

rarely found interesting themselves in the theological disputes of the time: Emilia Pia, on her death-bed recites, not a prayer, but passages from the *Cortigiano*. Other interests, many of them of a very worldly character, replace religion. Pious belief lost much of its mystical character; in art, we can trace a change from the fascination that shines in the spirit to the allurement that lurks in the senses. Very little art was produced in the fourteenth century that was not of a religious character; in the fifteenth century it is chiefly religious, but becomes more frequently employed in the adornment of the house; the joy and force of life were exhibited in the frescoes of public buildings.[1] The decay of severe religious conviction was accompanied by increased laxity in morals, or rather, in conventional morals, and this large toleration spread until the shackles of the Catholic Reaction were forged at Trent and the Church fulminated its counterblast to the Reformation. Since orthodox doctrine states that we are all alike condemned, as the descendants of Adam, to the tortures of Hell, and a few only are pardoned through a Divine Sacrifice—apart from all question of merit—it is not very surprising to find ladies of doubtful reputation, but undeniable beauty, selected by religious artists of the Renaissance to represent saints; and, from saints, the transition is not difficult to the Queen of Heaven herself. Giulia Farnese, surrounded by angels, is transferred by the brush of Pinturicchio to the walls of the Vatican;[2] the lovely features of a woman of loosest life, a murderess, even,

[1] *E. Muntz*, Histoire de l'Art pendant la Renaissance, 1889, I, 273-4.

[2] *Alvisi*, loc. cit., p. 15.

serve Luini for his portrait of St. Catherine at Milan. Fra Filippo Lippi paints his mistress, the nun whom he bore away from her convent, as Our Lady ; Palma Vecchio chooses a courtesan to sit for his St. Barbara. But it must not be forgotten that even a tardy repentance may still bring salvation, and, militant or triumphant, there is but one Church.

The traveller will remember the beautiful mosaics of the fifth century at Ravenna which set forth the baptism of our Lord by St. John ; the Jordan is depicted as a river-god. Tradition and pride of race account for that curious admission of ancient gods to the company of Christian saints which so often confronts us, and the classical revival reinforced existing tendencies.[1] Quite naturally St. Sebastian took the place of Apollo, though, according to Vasari, it is more than doubtful whether his beautiful nudity was always productive of maidenly meditations. Before the Reformation, the Church was supreme ; no antagonism was felt between culture and faith. Yet, when aware of these facts, it is still a surprise to find female saints, nay, the Virgin herself, linked with courtesans in a collection of eulogies of very illustrious women.[2] The truth is that, though ancient piety still filled many hearts, though children left their play and old people caught up their crutches, lured by the fiery eloquence of passionate pulpits, during the Renaissance, as during other periods of the world's history, Faith was on the wane. For a generation or so, festal gaiety and frigid worldliness alternately held suzerainty : they

[1] *E. Muntz*, La renaissance en Italie, etc., 1885, p. 20, note i.

[2] Epitapha clarissimarum mulierum quae virtute, arte aut aliqua nota claruerunt, a manuscript volume preserved at Munich.

were rare spirits who, like Ariosto, might escape to those fantastic realms where hearts beat high at capricious visions, and the low subtle laugh of irony was heard.

For more than a century before Humanism was at full flood there had been half-conscious scepticism, which some wives of burghers, even, had caught, and which led to inquiries perilous to the welfare of the soul.[1] Men and women conformed, but were indifferent. Superstitions more ancient than the formulated Christian creed mingled with and survived it. Throughout our period absurdities and incongruities abound ; one woman would set up a wax image of her niece in church to preserve her from harm, another would leave a ducat for friars to have a feast,[2] the milk of the Virgin was carefully preserved in more than one holy place ; charms were used, and Jesus, the Holy Mother and the saints invoked at the same time, and the priest was called in at the slightest ailment.[3] But there was much less credulity in Italy than in Northern Europe.

Almost everybody retained an uncriticized reverence for the sacraments and other religious rites ; such a feeling was in harmony with curious and very ancient superstitions which are not extinct even now. From this it was an easy step to belief in magic ; as religion waned a trust in occultism and the power of magic and charms increased. This form of "cowardice in regard to the supernatural," as Theophrastus calls it, is no unfamiliar phenomenon at times of intellectual *aufklärung* and the religious perplexity which accom-

[1] *C. Guasti*, Diario di un notaro, II, 100, 101.

[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 95. [3] Cento novelle, viii, nov. 3.

panies it. But one is perhaps a little astounded to find Pomponazzo, who disbelieved in immortality, writing a work on incantations and crediting their efficacy,[1] and Angelo Poliziano, a man of the highest culture, standing before the public to lecture on Aristotle and giving his personal experience of witches.[2] To a large extent an active belief in magic replaced an active belief in Christianity ; it was the revival of ancient superstition that had never quite disappeared. A book of incantations was found near Siena in 1383, and the Father Inquisitor, writing on 13 June, says it contained directions to cause sickness, to summon devils, to enable any one to compel the presence of a lover by night or day, etc. The citizens entreated the Inquisitor to desist, and even defied him.[3] The grossest indecencies were practised in some of these magical procedures. Folk believed that the sterility of the union of Guidobaldo of Urbino and his cultivated duchess was due to magic art.[4] It was popularly credited that the wearing of green, adopted by the courtiers of Frederick II, and specially a Mohammedan colour, was unlucky, and garments of that colour are not to be found in early paintings, though in the fifteenth century the Ferrarese artists began to use it. In the Archives at Modena a list of days may be found during which it is unwise to begin a course of medicine, to be bled or seek healing in any way ; they amount to about a week in all in each month.

[1] *P. Pomponatius*, De nat. effect. causis, s. de incantationibus Basileæ, 1556.

[2] *A. von Reumont*, Lorenzo de' Medici, 1874, II, 59-60.

[3] *Guiseppe Sanesi*, Boll. sen., ann. III, 384, 385.

[4] *Baldi*, Vita di Guidobaldo, Milano, 1811, p. 103.

The list bears the date 1472, and the prejudice was endorsed by the medical men of the period.[1] Jews were supposed to be specially skilled in necromancy, and women sought gipsies to have their fortunes told after this race of wanderers migrated into Italy in 1422. Their first appearance is recorded. We find that on 18 July, of that year, a troupe of about a hundred gipsies came to Bologna, bearing a decree from the Emperor which gave them permission to steal wherever they went and forbade their being brought to justice. The band slept without the walls, except their duke, who stayed at an inn, and so they remained fifteen days, the duke's wife being much visited, "especially as she could foretell events. Few went who did not lose their purses, and women their gear. Their women-folk went through the city in bands of six or eight together and wormed themselves into the citizens' houses, talking rubbish ; and others went about, pretending to price things, and one of them stole. It being bruited abroad that a great robbery had been committed, it was proclaimed that no one should go to them under penalty of fifty lire and excommunication. It was permitted to those who had been robbed to steal from the stealers up to the value of their loss. Seeing they could no longer filch they turned towards Rome. They were the ugliest race ever seen in these parts, thin and black, and they gorged like swine." [2]

Astrologers were paid by the communes of S. Gimignano and other places in the thirteenth cen-

[1] *Bertoni*, La biblioteca estense, p. 189, note 2.

[2] Ist. di Bologna apud *Muratori*, R.I.S., xviii.

tury ;[1] they became extremely important people during the High Renaissance ; they were employed to cast the horoscopes of new-born infants, nor was the mother happy until she had one and found it favourable, nor dared a bride set out on her wedding journey or be married except on days found to be propitious, nor indeed was anything done without consulting watchers of stars and reputed masters of the heavens' profoundest secrets.

In the thirteenth century witches were rare ; one was burned alive in 1279 ; in 1316 a contract was drawn up at Cividale, in the presence of two canons, whereby one of them engaged to pay a certain butcher's daughter when she should fulfil her undertaking to remove spells productive of impotence.[2] The Langobards had a great dread of witchcraft, and the Italian word for a witch, *strega*, is the Langobard *striga*, with one vowel altered.[3] The barbarian conquerors of Italy framed laws against witches, but the dread of witchcraft became nearly extinct. In 1410, however, we find a severe law against witchcraft passed at Venice, and in this century judicial trials of reputed witches reappear. The gullibility and zeal of the revivalist preachers of this century resuscitated the ancient superstition,[4] and St. Bernardino's mission was followed by the sacrifice of old women. The Popes, converted into temporal princes, were easily persuaded to

> Compound for sins they were inclined to
> By damning those they had no mind to,

[1] *Davidsohn*, Forschungen z. Geschict. v. Florenz, 1901, II.
[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., 282. [3] *Hodgkin*, loc. cit., vi. 233.
[4] *S. Bernardino*, loc. cit., III, 119 sqq.

and a Papal Bull, directed against practitioners of witchcraft, was issued in 1484 ; it was followed by an active persecution of decrepit old hags. Hitherto the statutes of various cities, such as Perugia, had allowed a witch to purge herself of her offence by paying a fine ; but dark German superstitions were creeping down the beautiful valleys of Como and Cammonica, and gloom and terror reigned therein. In 1468 a member of the government of Bologna was condemned for keeping a house of ill-fame where devils assembled and took the form of girls.[1] The Catholic Reaction increased the fear and hatred of witches; and an expectant attention easily discovered their stigmata. They were found to abound. The gentle and exemplary Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, who was deemed worthy of canonization, was their eager persecutor. But educated people, imperfectly impressed by the Biblical record of witches, then regarded the whole subject of necromancy as a superstition or as knavery practised on gulls,[2] and even bishops might be found who disbelieved. A young and enthusiastic inquisitor, who had just got his gown, had already burned one hundred witches, whom he found in sub-alpine valleys, when the peasantry armed themselves and gathered in force to stop him ; he appealed to the bishop, who ordered him to desist, for "only silly women were sufficiently credulous to accept such doctrines," whereon that dignitary was asked "what was there to prevent the devil from assuming a woman's form"?[3] We find an

[1] *Muratori*, loc. cit. (Ann. Buoniensis), xxiii. 897.

[2] *Bandello*, iii. n. 29, n. 52.

[3] *Alciatus*, παρεργων juris, Lugduni, 1554, vii. c. 23. See also Questio de strigibus, Romæ, 1576.

inquisitor writing a book to express his horror that any doubt concerning the subject could exist; whereupon jurisconsults of Piacenza and Lodi deny the possibility of witchcraft, and a discussion ensues.[1] But many women, acting on the prevalent superstition, believed themselves to be witches or assumed the character, and so gave direct encouragement to the credulity of the undiscerning and of the Inquisitors.

It will be a relief to the reader to turn from the cruel persuasions of dogma to that beneficent piety which consists in the alleviation of suffering and in practical service to man. When Vettor Pisani brought Genoese prisoners to Venice in 1378 the Venetian ladies (who, a little later, parted with their jewellery to raise the means for the defence of their city) set themselves to mitigate the miseries of these captive enemies. And in the next century, Vespasiano Bisticci, in his account of holy women, invariably lays stress on their deeds of charity. Quite early we find each corporation providing itself with doctor and hospital, and, out of these associations, benevolent institutions for special purposes arose. In 1338 there were a thousand beds for the sick at Florence alone, and humanitarian sentiment was so active and so progressive in Italy that before the end of the fifteenth century 234 hospitals can be counted, to which over a score were added in the sixteenth century. Arnald von Harff, who visited the peninsula in the last years of the fifteenth century, gives a detailed description of the admirably equipped public hospital at Siena; it was well provided with medical attendance; there

[1] For the whole subject consult *Cantù*, loc. cit., viii. 426-30; x. 313-61.

was a men's ward of half a hundred white beds, attended to by six women ; also a ward for sick women ; attached was an institution for foundlings, lodging over 700 children,[1] whom the State reared and educated. Martin Luther, who visited Rome in 1511, speaks with admiration of Italian hospitals. He gives an account of the reception of a patient and of how he or she received every possible attention : " Many ladies," he says, " also take it in turns to visit the hospital and tend the sick, keeping their faces veiled so that no one may know who they are. Each remains a few days, then returns home, and another takes her place. . . . Equally excellent are the foundling hospitals, where children are well fed, excellently taught, suitably clothed in uniform, and altogether admirably cared for." And in this century, when law became more strictly administered through the centralization of authority—authority illegitimately seized and without proper title, as it so often was—the overflowing charity of women often led them to sympathize with malefactors ;[2] for woman in subjection is ever an insurgent at heart.

[1] Die Pilgerfahrt des Ritters Arnald von Harff, Cöln, 1860, pp. 12, 13.

[2] *Giraldi Cinthio* (*Giov. Batt*), Hecatommithi, iii. nov. 10.

THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL AT SIENA

DOMENICO DI BARTOLO DI GHERZO (†† 1449)

Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, Siena

CHAPTER XIII

CANONIZED AND BEATIFIED WOMEN

A GREAT number of women in our period, even during the High Renaissance, lived saintly lives and have been given rank in Heaven by the Church. Pastor gives a list of twenty-seven, and this is confessedly incomplete. Those belonging to the first half are remarkable for their intrepid defiance of the rebellious flesh, which they were never weary of macerating and mortifying ; they indulged in a delirium of unsolicited heroism ; they made their peace with God by self-torture and self-immolation. Sta. Chiara of Aniri (1275-1308) was canonized in 1881, the due number of miracles having been satisfactorily proved. Her body (still preserved at Montefalco) has moved its members. Among her austerities it is recorded that once, when she had spoken unnecessarily, she stood in cold water and repeated the Lord's Prayer one hundred times. She battered herself into realizing all the sufferings of Christ, and, like many a pious person under strong conviction of sin, she believed, during eleven years, that God had forsaken her ; but, after death, the image of Christ was found imprinted on her heart. Sta. Chiara of Rimini († 1325), a saintly charwoman, cooked disgusting food for herself and ate it, saying, " Now, glutton, devour " ; she went barefoot, wore an iron shift (still preserved at Rimini),

spent whole nights in prayer, and, during Lent, dwelt in a hole in the wall, exposed to cold and rain, praying all the time. Even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries we find Christian heroines like the Blessed Christina Visconti († 1453), who drove a nail through her foot to feel the sufferings of Christ, and tied her head up so as to be awakened every time she nodded. The Blessed Stefana Quinzani of Soncino (1457-1530), wore a ciclium for six years, so that her skin came off with it; she also wore a cord of thirty-three knots; each represented a year in the life of Christ and each worked a separate hole in her flesh. The Blessed Osanna of Rimini prayed for twelve years to partake of Christ's sufferings and was rewarded by the stigmata in 1476; and the Blessed Osanna of Mantua († 1565) slept for fifteen years on two poles with cross bars; she reposed her head on a wooden pillow, and was covered only by a single blanket.[1]

Nevertheless, as we proceed from the mediaeval towards the modern world we find less "sacred selfishness" and vulgar individualism, stronger convictions of Divine love and an increased devotion to the needs of suffering humanity. This was especially the case with widows. Even in the thirteenth century we find Filippa di Albizo da Vico, who, in early womanhood, lost two husbands of high character in rapid succession, entering a Dominican convent and devoting her life to the care of the sisters who were sick, "doing the vilest offices and praying for them". Sta. Caterina of Siena and Sta. Caterina Rieti nursed the plague-

[1] Acta Sanctorum, etc., quas coll. *J. Bollandus*, operam cont. *G. Henschenius*, etc., 1734 *et seq.*; *Dunbar*, Agnes B. C., A Dict. of Saintly Women, 1904.

stricken with fearless devotion and tender assiduity. We hear more and more of good works. Sta. Caterina Adorni († 1510), wished to be a nun, but was deemed to be too delicate ; she was married to a profligate noble, who often gave her blame, but she never attempted to excuse herself, and finally she had the reward of converting him. Upon his death, though belonging to a family that boasted its popes and cardinals, she determined, after due deliberation, to lead an active and not a cloistered life ; she devoted her wealth to the sick poor and gave them personal service. She was an eminently practical woman, attending to the duty of the moment and putting all else aside.[1]

Sometimes we find a repentant Magdalen among the saints ; such was Sta. Chiara da Rimini, a dissolute young widow who was turned from evil ways by a heavenly voice, heard in church, which commanded her to say one *ave* and think of what she was doing.[2]

Most of the female saints exhibited what many would consider an unwholesome precocity in their religious development. Sta. Francesca of Rome (1384-1440) was remarkable for early piety ; she shunned other children, refused to join them at their games, and maintained reserve, even with her family ; she would not let her father touch her hands, even, unless they were covered. She was forced into marriage and developed into a dutiful wife and good housekeeper, was gentle with others and charitable towards them, but severely austere to herself. The

[1] *T. C. Upham*, St. Catherine Adorni, 1884 ; *Fr. von Hügel*, The Mystical Element in Religion as studied in St. Catherine of Genoa, etc., 1909.

[2] *Ch. du Bussy*, Courtisannes devenues saintes, 1859, p. 150.

Blessed Stefana Quinzani took the vows at the age of seven. Sta. Colomba of Rieti (1467-1501) is said to have scattered thorns in her bed at the age of three. Sta. Colomba dei Trocazani († 1517), avoided the society of other girls and took to fasting and other austerities; Osanna of Mantua had celestial visions at the age of five, and Sta. Caterina Ricci gave early evidences of piety. The well-balanced mind of Sta. Caterina Adorni manifested a religious disposition in childhood, and that great spiritual genius, St. Catherine of Siena, at the age of six, suddenly stood motionless in the highway and saw all Heaven lying open to her gaze. Probably such infant prodigies were usually taken in hand by earnest friars, who subjected their religious faculty to a forcing process. Certainly letters and recorded utterances of female saints ordinarily contain echoes of the great evangelistic preachers of their time.

The saints saw visions. The writer doubts whether the visions of adult saints, though abnormal, were so unhealthy a symptom as the phenomena of religious precocity. All who examine the elements of their own experience, if they really put themselves to the trouble of rigorously pursuing the investigation, will find that there are immaterial elements through which alone the material or sense-components in consciousness can be —far less can in any way become, in the least degree, endowed with form and vitality. All progress in knowledge is a re-thinking of experience, but thought and the unseen are present in the simplest percept. Memory is an incorporeal act; to the child and the savage all things are living creatures; in the crudest exercise of thought things are alive, and, perhaps, after

the most rigorous analysis of experience, the metaphysician may find himself standing with the child and the savage once again in a company of ghostly presences, in a Universe wherein there is nothing that is not spiritual and has not a spiritual signification.[1] We easily mistake fictions for facts, but there is no fiction so glaring as that of the independent existence of matter, which is, indeed, nothing but an abstraction. The highest imaginative intellects are on the side of the child: they are seers; their conceptions come to them personified; they have the defects of their merit and dwell on the borderland of what, for the ordinary practical purposes of daily life, is illusion. All or almost all the saints fall into ecstasies and behold visions: we live in a world of visions, all of us; the question of importance is how far our visions are interpretable.

But it is worthy of note that nearly all female saints after St. Catherine of Siena, become the spouses of Christ. This distinction seems to have been regarded as a special mark of saintship, just as we find the reception of the stigmata to become the rule after St. Francis. St. Catherine of Siena had heavenly visions, received the stigmata, and was wedded by Our Lord with a ring, invisible to others, but always to be seen by herself. The honour bestowed on this illustrious saint was shared by several successors. A heavenly angel brought a ring to the Blessed Angelina of Spoleto († 1450) as a sign of her espousals to Christ; the Blessed Stefana Quinzani received the stigmata and also became a heavenly bride; the

[1] See, for example, Professor *A. Taylor's* Elements of Metaphysics, Book III, Cosmology, 1903.

Blessed Osanna of Rimini received the stigmata after twelve years of petition ; Sta. Caterina of Racconigi in Piedmont (1486-1547) received the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove surrounded by rays of light, clouds, and tongues of fire, and was married by the Lord, on three several occasions, between the ages of six and twenty-six, each time with a different ring ; she also received the stigmata. The Blessed Osanna of Mantua was married by the Holy Virgin to her Son with a ring. It must not be forgotten that, as in all other matters, there was an eager competition in saints, both as to their number and quality, between the rival and antagonistic orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic.[1]

The existence of a few sceptical scholars must not blind us to the true quality of the Renaissance intellect ; the men and women of that period possessed but small knowledge of Nature and natural processes ; a trained power in the close observation of natural phenomena was no part of their education, nor was the kind of criticism that is evoked by the tests of experimental verification. The populace was credulous ; the issues of thought were entangled ; truth only glimmered in the dim half-light of tradition. Hence it is difficult for us, to-day, to disengage the exact fact from the mass of legend that immediately enveloped the saints, though most inquirers would probably summarily dismiss the statement made concerning Sta. Caterina Racconigi, though attested by her friends, Francesco Pico della Mirandola, Count of Concordia, and Peter Martyr of Garescio. She is reported to have travelled for four hours through the air at the

[1] *C. Alvisi*, Cesare Borgia, p. 22.

rate of eighty miles an hour. But then she was borne by angels.

Dismissing such statements, there remains indisputable evidence of genuine religious ecstasy. Some of the phenomena recorded carry one's thoughts to what psychologists now speak of as "suggestion" and "expectant attention". Marriage to the Saviour and the reception of the stigmata recur with suspicious frequency. Self-hypnosis would be a satisfactory explanation, but self-hypnosis, though seemingly not unpractised by Fakirs and a few experimenters, is rarely found except in people who have been taught to produce it at the hands of some hypnotizer, and then only in subjects capable of deep hypnosis.[1] It may be urged, again, that semi-civilized peoples are very prone to psychopathic manifestations. Of such is a disease of the intellectual reflexes which, according to Gilles de la Tourette, is latent in all Malays: suggestion will cause the Malay woman, modest to a fault, to strip herself naked in the presence of strangers. The Samoyeds, also, are subject to an analogous affection, while diseases of the emotional reflexes are common among people in whom the emotional element is unrestrained by the intellectual centres and who unduly encourage the free discharge of their feelings. But these diseases are separated from religious ecstasy by a wide gap: their manifestations are those of debased and not of exalted intelligence or emotion. To any theory of conscious deception this is a rugged stumbling-block. There is extravagant legend, there are indications of undue stimulation, rivalry and imitation, yet not for one moment can the essential

[1] *J. Milne Bramwell*, Hypnotism, 1906, p. 52.

sincerity of the most illustrious among these female saints be called into question. Their sanctity of heart and life was wholly genuine; on the whole their visions realized desires of the noblest kind; their letters are full of ineffable peace and the love of God and men; they were sincerely humble-minded, and, if there would seem to be an admixture of presumption and even of colossal egotism with their humility, as when St. Catherine of Bologna declares that her words are dictated by God, and St. Catherine of Siena believes that she bears the burden of national sins on her person, it is the kind of egotism that is indissociable from a vast consciousness of power. They were women of strong character, they sacrificed youth, wealth, pleasure, at the altar of duty; they are models of fortitude, resolution and practical wisdom no less than of purity of soul; they possessed remarkable knowledge of the secrets of the human heart, remarkable power of penetrating the minds of others, and they exercised such a personal magnetism over all who came in contact with them as compelled furious ruffians and blaspheming homicides, even, to be gentle at a word or a glance; the mere expression of the saint's desire had power to change the set-current of another's life. They have certain characteristics that mark the mystics of all ages and of every faith; they seem to themselves to have reached what is the deep desire of all religious spirits—union with God—though the special character of this illumination is always in the form of the special religious synthesis in which they confide. To comprehend the unity of the Whole is the aim of the thinker; to feel at one with the Whole is the desire of the saint.

Always, as in the case of St. Catherine of Siena, who for three years was the subject of frightful temptation, a period of disturbance is followed by peace.

This noblest and sweetest of saints exerted an influence, religious, political, and social, that places her in the very first rank of illustrious women. Caterina Benincasa, the daughter of a dyer of Siena, resolutely devoted every moment of her days to the service of God. She pleaded for the lives, though she applauded the punishment of offenders.[1] One blaspheming ruffian, Tuldo, at a word from her receives the sacrament for the first time in his life and entreats her to stay with him and give him strength to meet his merited fate. "Be comforted, sweet brother, I will await you," she says, and, as soon as the bell strikes she is there, seeing no one, hearing no one, but absorbed in prayer. She lays her own head on the block to give him courage, lays her hand steadily on his head while the axe falls, and while the severed member remains in her hands, with the smell of blood filling her nostrils, she sees his soul ascend to Heaven.[2] Catherine was a ministering angel to the poor, and in the great epidemic of 1374 she devoted herself to the care of the plague-stricken; she comforted a leper, whom no one would approach, with her gentle ministry and sisterly kisses. More charitable than is usual with women of correct life, she pities the prostitute, writes to a public woman of Perugia as her "sweet daughter" and exhibits a peculiar devotion to "tender loving" Mary Magdalen. With masculine boldness and independence of judgment, however mistaken, she goes to Florence and tells the rebellious priors

[1] Lettere, Firenze, 1860, clxx. [2] *Ibid.*, LXX. iii.

that they owe obedience to the Pope; and there we find her facing a sacking, burning mob, and when their leader brandishes his sword to take her life, she disarms him and his followers by meekly saying, "I am Catherine. Do with me as God shall permit." She travels to Avignon, confronts the fiery Pope and his corrupt Court, and humbly but fearlessly charges them with infamy in words that must have burned their souls. "Avignon," she said, "stank in her nostrils like Hell."[1] She had much to do with the fatal return of the Papacy to Rome, and was in political communication with two Popes, the Kings of France and Hungary, the Queen of Naples, and Sir John Hawkwood, the greatest military commander of his age.

Most of the great qualities of St. Catherine are also to be found, though in less measure, in the saintly women who followed her. Visions and prophecies abound, but there is no mental disintegration, no decay of any mental quality, no lack of mental co-ordination, no havoc of faculty. There is not even artifice of style; everything comes straight from the heart, and the same spiritual thoughts remain fresh, however often repeated, because they are frankly and straightforwardly expressed.

Yet, mingled with these high qualities of heart and intellect are manifestations that are, usually, accompaniments of neurotic disease. Sta. Caterina Ricci had been ill for two years when she saw, in sleep, the saints make the sign of the cross over her whole body, and she awoke cured; but the malady is said to have recurred and again to have departed through inter-

[1] Acta Sanctorum, Aprilis, iii. 89.

STATUE IN WOOD OF ST. CATHERINE

BY NEROCCIO DI BARTOLOMEO LANDI (1447-1500)

cession. An earlier saint, Chiara Gambacorti, lost the use of her limbs until she was allowed to become a nun. Such cases suggest hysteria, and authorities say of that complaint that, in the majority of cases intellectual disorder is not conspicuous and mental abnormality is mainly evidenced by exaggerated impressionability or tumultuous emotion.[1] "The mental condition of many hysterics is only paroxysmally abnormal in times of excitement or stress." Ordinarily there are anæsthetic or hyperæsthetic or paralytic or contractile phenomena in the markedly hysterical subject. Usually the absorption of the whole mind in some spiritual idea was accompanied in the saints by loss of objective consciousness and bodily rigidity. In the case of St. Catherine of Siena these phenomena were very pronounced, and medical authorities speak of them as characteristic of religious ecstasy, a condition which they regard as analogous to the hysterical. Perversion of sensibility, so that there was a positive love of pain, is a phenomenon of hysteria; we have noted it in more than one saint, but it always had for its object the breaking down of bodily rebellion by the realization of sufferings which Christ endured. A Jesuit apologist maintains that two kinds of experience, the hysterical and supernatural, may co-exist.[2]

Another apologist urges that the resolute will may put itself into relation with unseen verities.[3] The orthodox Catholic explanation fails to note the fact that the characteristic phenomena of mysticism, in-

[1] *Donkin*, Art. "Hysteria," in *Tuke*, Dict. of Psych. Medicine.

[2] *G. Hahn*, S.J., Revue des questions scientifiques, Brux.

[3] *Henri Joly*, Psychology of Saints, tr. G. Tyrell, S.J., Lond, 1898.

cluding visions, are to be found among the followers of many faiths. A noble mysticism is by no means confined to Catholicism or even to Christianity; Swedenborg and Böhme were not Catholics, and Mohammed may be cited as an illustrious instance of a mystic who founded a new religion. It is the characteristic of mystics of all times and in every land to fall into deadness to outward things and find their highest spiritual ideas embodied in vision. If, in times when a lively belief in devils exists, we get "possession" by them, when there is profound yearning for the Living God we are told of "immediate illumination". But it varies in form with the dogmatic setting into which that faith has been moulded by environment and education. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to a proper understanding of these phenomena is their extreme rarity in our own days, though, indeed, John Engelbrecht was conveyed to Heaven and witnessed its "splendorous glory" as late as the early part of the last century. But, at present, our organized knowledge carries us only a very little way towards the understanding of these matters. It is easy to recognize that defective nutrition of the nerve-centres, consequent on a habit of fasting, must alter their activity; we may speculate about the reflexes of emotional excitement and the spread of the disturbance to the centres for intellect. Yet, given a body of belief, it is a mark of vigorous intellectual health to conform to it. This is what the saints did. By admitting so much we are far from furnishing an explanation of the visions of such a woman as St. Catherine. However, the fact that thought is not wholly dependent on speech may indicate a course

of inquiry: that fact is shown every time we say, "I know what I mean but the words will not come". Often, in thinking, we use not words but muscular and visual and even visceral feelings as symbols, and in this respect there are varieties in human experience. Vivid imagination is a quality to be found in genius of the highest order, and the writer has known the interpenetration of unconscious inventions of fancy with fact, a condition of mind so usual with children, to persist in at least one gifted man, so that he confused subjective imagery with objective reality; yet in all other respects he was normal. Conviction may, as with Swedenborg, quicken into the semblance of active, sensible presence, so intensely perceived that an objective validity is attributed to it by the seer without his thought losing one whit of logical coherence. Even Maudsley, a materialist who regards mysticism as disease, admits that "Nature may find an incomplete mind a more suitable instrument for a particular purpose. It is the work that is done, and the quality of the worker by whom it is done, that is of moment."[1]

But our conscious life contains more than our personal experiences and our personal reflections on them: still less do these serve to account for the manifestations of genius. Since Maudsley wrote, our knowledge of a region which lies below the consciousness of the empirical ego has been extended. Even in his time it was known how much of the best mental work is prepared or even accomplished during sleep: so was produced that vivid vision of Coleridge accompanied

[1] *H. Maudsley*, Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings, 1886, p. 257.

by a harmony of words whereof Kubla Khan remains a precious fragment; St. Catherine, who was so apt a scholar that she believed she learned to read by miracle, was convinced that her wonderful letters were inspired during sleep. Modern investigation seems to have discovered an obscure substrate of our consciousness, and that the power of *tacking* to a new mental world, in that combination of will, intellect and intuition which we call genius, proceeds from it. Professor William James holds that many varieties of experience are manifestations of the unconscious self, and that this spiritual substrate may manifest itself as intellectual or religious genius, taking forms into which the conscious life has already been moulded by its environment.[1] He sees no reason why specifically neurotic natures, whatever difficulty they may experience in adjusting themselves to the practical exigencies of this work-a-day world, may not have deeper relations than the plain man in the street, and the tendencies, revealed by disturbance, may be of a profounder character than that of the normal consciousness under the control of the pressing necessities of practical life. The essential characteristic of the mystics, it may be observed, remains constant throughout their varied experience: it is that sense of union with the heart of the Universal Whole which, as has already been said, animates the religious consciousness and impels all deep reflection to strive to comprehend it. And the most recent views as to the real nature of the material world and of the body as the bearers and excitants of consciousness—views forced on the philosopher alike by the antinomies of scientific thought and the exigencies of

[1] *James*, Varieties of Relig. Exper. 1902, Lect. xx.

metaphysical thought—give to these substrates of our being a spiritual interpretation.[1]

We may at least conclude that the high enthusiasm of such saintly women as St. Catherine of Siena, however corrupted by disease, corroded by mistake and entangled with illusion, was a flame proceeding from the mysterious silences that enwrap and support our conscious life; an inward ardour, not wholly achieved by effort or wholly appearing at invitation. She and others realized divine power in the form of sensible presence. As the most subtle if the most sceptical of living philosophers says, "there are more ways than one of apprehending Deity". "Outside of spirit there is not and cannot be any reality, and the more anything is spiritual so much the more is it veritably real."[2] And spiritual in no low degree were the lives and convictions of Catherine of Siena and Catherine of Genoa. Yet we must not forget that, as Mr. Joachim remarks,[3] immediate experience, however spiritual and intense, is "neither true nor false except so far as it stands the test of mediation" and gains admission into the organised system of knowledge. It would seem that, in certain cases and under certain enthusiasms, the instruments of our being may inhibit our normal life and flash forth in some broken fragment, some distorted image of inward vision that, none the less, reflects some kind of truth. That conviction

[1] Professor *James Ward*, Naturalism and Agnosticism, 1899; Professor *J. Royce*, Nature, Man and the Moral Order, N.Y., 1904; Professor *A. Taylor*, Mind and Nature, Int. Journ. of Ethics, Oct., 1902.

[2] *F. H. Bradley*, Appearance and Reality, 1897.

[3] *H. H. Joachim*, Nature of Truth, 1906.

of essential union with the unseen, which is the profoundest utterance of the human heart and mind, felt as passionate emotion, may, under conditions at present unknown and which we may never succeed in fully understanding, precipitate itself into vision whereof the only illusion is that, being so vivid and alive, material quality is attributed to it.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NUN

THE devout imagination of many young girls was affected by the piety and peace that dwelt behind the cloistered wall, or was swept towards the ascetic life by one of those hurricanes of religious excitement that so often agitated Italy. In spite of the parental subjugation of the maiden, a strong-willed young woman would sometimes have her way, nor in this religious regard only. A merchant of strong and resolute character tells us how he sent his daughter, Lena, to S. Gimignano, to be a companion to a rich widow "who desired her as a mother might; and in a few months the girl changed her mind, joining the white penitents, dressing herself in their garb and betaking herself to them, with a daughter of Berto di Picchiena of S. Gimignano, and, also, with a lady of means who was there, beating herself in the company of about a hundred men and women. She changed her mind again, for going one day to the convent of S. Girolamo of S. Gimignano, she refused to leave and stayed six months in that mind, and then I went thither, and she desired to stay on. And I being there, as I have said, and being of the same opinion with her and the nuns, she became a nun in that convent, and they gave me

back the dower.[1] And I put down 30 florins the same day. And on April 4th, 1445, she took the veil."[2] Her sisters were sent to be educated at an Augustinian convent, but they only stayed eleven months and refused to return. Many girls took the veil to escape from an uncongenial marriage : Sta. Colomba of Rieti (1467-1501) fled to a convent when a marriage was arranged for her without her consent. The convent was also a refuge to which widows turned when they found the tutelage of their family unbearable or did not wish to pass under the marriage-yoke a second time. Sometimes, too, a married pair would agree to separate, and the wife would enter a convent : we find, for example, a lady of Pescia petitioning the bishop to this end and gaining it, for her husband fully consented.[3]

The nun was usually dowered and often supported by her relatives, but the dower to a husband was a heavier sum than that payable to a convent ; so vast numbers of unhappy girls were compelled to take the veil. The growth of courts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the introduction of primogeniture and the despisal of trade that followed, are accountable for an increase in the number of these involuntary nuns. In the family to which Sta. Caterina de' Ricci belonged we find six girls taking the veil between the ages of 9 and 13. The General Council of Pescia determined, 17 May, 1558, to turn a hospital into a convent "since the multitude of unmarried girls is increased by fathers being unable

[1] i.e. from the insurance office or Monte della dote.

[2] *C. Carnesecchi*, Un fiorentino, etc., Archiv. stor. it., V, iv.

[3] *Stiavelli*, loc. cit., p. 167.

to marry them according to their rank and condition" ; yet convents in the same city were suppressed because girls were incarcerated in them against their will. In the same century it was found that there were 30,000 girls at Florence, from 18 to 30 years of age, unable to marry for want of sufficient dower. Il Maracco, reporting to the Venetian patriarch, at the end of the century, writes that "few nuns are shut up by their free choice, but by their parents' pleasure, who thus escape the obligation of getting them married and giving them dower".[1]

That, on the whole, convents were well-conducted is shown by the fact that merchants sent their daughters to them for education and that we rarely find even wealthy fathers objecting to their daughters taking the veil ; moreover we know how many women of saintly life were to be found within the convent-walls. Nuns seem to have been kept well occupied ; they were engaged in needlework, and though, at the visitation to the nunnery of S. Niccolò at Udine, in 1385, the sisters were found to be unable to read,[2] we discover Dominican nuns, who were the best educated, copying Latin manuscripts in that century, and, after the introduction of printing, convents set up printing presses. Nuns were not merely busy at sewing, but they cooked, made confectionery, looked after the garden,[3] and taught ; in the sixteenth century we find them practising sweet singing together ;[4] and from the fourteenth century we find them composing sacred dramas in which their

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 151. [2] *Ibid.*, 104.

[3] *Belgrano*, Vita privata, etc., p. 176.

[4] *Luzio* e *Renier*, loc. cit.

young pupils took part ;[1] there was eager desire to dress as men and play male parts ; but that this apparently simple, peaceful life was not always what it seemed, is shown by the occurrence of an occasional breach of the peace, as when, in a dispute as to who should preside at the organ, the stage properties were seized as missiles and stage swords drawn in the conflict.[2]

But if convents were generally well conducted, it may be imagined that it was with difficulty when girls without any vocation were forced into the heroic life. Under any circumstances such a life can hardly be undertaken by the natural woman without severe conflict : "No sooner," says the Blessed Caterina of Bologna, speaking from her own experience, "no sooner are they within the convent than they repent of that which, before, they so ardently desired, and, were it not for very shame, they would renounce and go forth, and this oftenest happens to those destined to bear great fruit to God. Devotion becomes insipid and they fall into deep dejection. . . . But the Bride of Christ must not yield to this deception : with undaunted and combatant resolution she must subdue her mind and say to herself, 'though it is my Lord's will that I be thus tempted to the end of my days, yet never will I yield'."[3] Catherine of Bologna was an especially prudent abbess ; she would not admit novices during the trying heats of summer, but many an abbess was often an arbitrary ruler or weak and

[1] *D'Ancona*, Origini, etc., I, 160; II, 404, 416.

[2] *Frati*, loc. cit., p. 98.

[3] *Sabadini*, Vita della beata Catherina Bolognese, Bologna, 1502.

lax as a disciplinarian. The head of a nunnery was chosen for nobility of blood, legitimacy of birth, and the attainment of years that are supposed to bring discretion; but her task was difficult, even to a woman selected for rule on better grounds: there is a record of "saintly nuns" of the fourteenth century who were tempted by the Devil in the form of a handsome young man.[1]

Nuns by compulsion must always be undesirable elements in a convent, and many girls transferred thither the luxurious mode of living which obtained in their homes. In fact, before the reforms instituted by the Council of Trent, the convent was regarded as a social institution for the reception of inconvenient daughters; much liberty was allowed, especially when payment was made for them, and, in some convents, nuns led an almost human life. In Venice the silence of the cloister was broken by trumpet and fife and the joyous shouts of young patricians playing ball with the nuns. Antonio Francesco Grazzini informs us that at the carnival they were allowed to dress up as men, and took part in the fun, sword at side, like young gallants. Not rarely they took advantage of the laxity with which the rules were administered in the sixteenth century and stayed out all night with their lovers.[2] The "converted" public women and widows, herded with maidens in the same convent, did not always heighten its moral tone.

In all ages the convent has been the theatre of scandal, and those who know the Italy of to-day will have heard much evil concerning them. Masuccio,

[1] *Marcotti,* loc. cit., p. 81.

[2] *P. Molmenti,* Storia di Venez., etc., 1880, p. 416.

the novelist, the Doge Giano Fregoso and the Prior of Sta. Maria di Castello probably exaggerated their case to make it effective. But confining ourselves to the records of indisputable facts we find that, in 1329, the nuns of Montefalco were excommunicated by the Pope for licentious behaviour;[1] in 1447 a convent had to be "reformed" and the nuns were imprisoned for life;[2] in 1472 the Franciscan commissioner at Genoa reported that "the monks and nuns of that state live incontinent, irreligious and unbridled lives. Numerous instances were exposed throughout our whole period of convents found utterly corrupt, and there are still more frequently recorded cases where individual nuns failed to keep their vows. In 1432 a process was entered at Bologna against a nun who had fled to a druggist and lived with him for a month; her abbess gave her a very bad character, saying that a man had been found in her cell, and it appeared that she had had relations with many men, including a Dominican friar. A man employed in menial work at a convent was discovered to be the lover of a sister at another convent, and yet another menial had mistresses in two separate convents. Such cases were very common, and nuns seem to have looked with special favour on nobles, ragmen and wool-carders.[3] A Venetian historian speaks repeatedly of the debasement of convents and thinks that the Doge Andrea Contarini was deserving of great praise for resisting the wiles of nuns.[4]

[1] *L. Fiumi*, Eretici nel Umbria, Boll. del soc. Umbr. V, 223.

[2] *M. Caffi*, Le monache di S. Salvadore in Cremona, 1470-1, Arch. st. lomb., 1889, pp. 890-902.

[3] *Mazzoni-Torelli*, loc. cit., II, 866, 867.

[4] *Galliciolli*, Mem. Venete, I, 254, 262, 336; II, 269, 272.

Yet, considering how few nuns, in all probability, assumed the veil because they had a sincere vocation, the whole period compares favourably with an earlier age; we find nothing so unsavoury as the events that took place at Farfa in the tenth century.[1] Increased liberty was accorded to nuns from the middle of the fourteenth century, when the enforced seclusion of daughters first became common; and, while the rapid growth of humanitarianism caused discipline to be more and more relaxed, every effort was made to check immorality. The statutes imposed heavy fine, imprisonment and even death for the seduction of a nun, the punishment being mitigated if she were a consenting party. In 1403 the citizens of Bologna were forbidden to hang about convents, to play musical instuments near them, or to talk with the inmates at window or door;[2] the statutes of Perugia rendered any man found talking with a nun liable to severe punishment, but in 1469 we find the governor letting off one of the Baglioni on payment of four ducats only.[3] We came across one instance of atrocious severity in the fourteenth century exercised by a licentious and brutal tyrant. Bernabo Visconti, ruler of Milan, starved the Abbess of S. Maria Maggiore to death on a charge of unchastity (some have said she was burned to death); the unhappy girl was the illegitimate daughter of Matteo Visconti II, was made abbess at twenty, and it would seem that she was innocent.[4]

[1] *Rodulphus Glaber*, Hist., Ed. *Prou.*, Paris, 1886.

[2] *Frati*, loc. cit., 257.

[3] *L. Fiumi*, Un codice, etc., Boll. della soc. umbr., vi. 101.

[4] *M. Caffi*, Arch. stor. lomb., 1889. For another account see vol. x. (1883), p. 5 sqq.

CHAPTER XV

MORALS

LET any reader carefully examine the specific charges of vice and crime levelled by Dante against the men and women of the thirteenth century, and he will find he is provided with a circumstantial indictment of the age which the student of the Renaissance at its worst moment must find it hard to parallel.[1] We may search the court-poets of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries in vain to find the brutalities on which Dante prides himself—brutally kicking one of the damned on the head, seizing him by the scalp and threatening to tear out his hair until he reveals his name, for example, and luring another, for the same purpose, by a promise of relieving his sufferings, which he deliberately breaks directly his request is granted.[2] A lively belief in Hell exercised a brutalizing influence over a race that still bore the marks of an ancestry compounded of barbarous invaders and a debased, resentful, conquered people. Such gross and obscene songs as "Mother mine, get me a husband,"[3] and other ballads, popular in the thirteenth century, indicate the moral tone of the people.[4]

[1] Inf., xv. xvi.; Purg. xxvi. for example.

[2] Inf., xxiii. 73-124; xxiii. 109-157.

[3] *S. Ferrari*, Bibl. di lett. pop., I, 32.

[4] *Renier*, Misc. muz. Rossi-Teiss, Trento, 1897, p. 14.

We find generous hosts providing lemans for their guests ;[1] a legal instrument, dated 1227, shows a married man engaging to hold a young girl as his *amasia*, to legitimate any children he may have by her, and to marry her on his wife's decease.[2] If the wife declared her husband to be impotent he was allowed to prove virility before witnesses in a brothel, or on his wife behind a bed-curtain, and there exist many records of such cases among civil processes, especially among those belonging to the earlier part of our period,[3] and even during the Catholic reaction of the sixteenth century, Vincenzo Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua, gave proof on a *virgo intacta* before ambassadors and dignitaries of the Church. Barberino, in the thirteenth century, counselled women never to go to parties except by daylight, or where there was good illumination—a sufficient witness to the lewdness of his age. He also advises wives to close their eyes to their husbands' infidelities. In some parts of North Italy the adulterer was fined and condemned to lose an eye ; in the patriarchate of Aquileia the adulteress forfeited the life-tenancy of her dower or was shut up in a nunnery, but her husband could claim her again if he paid a fine and restored her dower.[4] Sometimes, but very rarely, we find a wife separating from her husband on the ground of his adultery ; usually, even in cases where the wife is at fault, reconciliation takes place. At Aosta those guilty of adultery were exposed, naked, in the market-place, to public contempt, a punishment

[1] *W. Heywood*, Ensamples, etc., p. 62.

[2] *L. Zdekauer*, Per la storia del divorzio, Boll. sen., V, 280.

[3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., pp. 73, 74.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

also administered at Susa to a prostitute who solicited.[1]

In the fourteenth century the abduction of married women was still a common event.[2] In country lanes a woman was still in danger of being ravished by some priest, even if he were carrying the Host to the sick.[3] In the provinces at the head of the Adriatic the rape of a girl was punishable by death or marriage with her.[4] In 1372 a poor citizen of Florence, who had been exiled for taking part in a brawl, returned by stealth and was denounced by a wealthy citizen. The punishment for his offence was death, but the prisoner pleaded that he was drawn back by the beauty of his wife, whom he yearned to see, and whom his denouncer held in keeping, and his statement turned out to be true. The Podestà with almost Eastern justice, let the injured exile go free and hanged the informant, despite the clamour of his powerful family. Adultery was not too severely regarded by the ordinary burgher; he was much away on his travels. Unfaithful himself, his wife was almost a stranger to him, and more than vestiges remained, in social relations, of the coarse animality of the Middle Ages; so an adulterous wife was usually soundly trounced and there the matter ended; more rarely, she was sent home to her parents.[5] Sacchetti thought more wives went astray through their husbands' fault than their own.[6] At Pescia and elsewhere the adulterer or the ravisher was

[1] *Cibrario*, loc. c t., II, 345.

[2] *Rodocanachi*, La femme it., etc., appendice, Condition civile de la femme, p. 386.

[3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 208.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 61.

[5] *Sacchetti*, nov. 84, 85, 86, 131.

[6] *Ibid.*, nov. 85.

subject to fine.[1] What was most feared was the ridicule that followed discovery: in the north of Italy a man might awake to find that his house was adorned with some significant sign of cuckoldom.

Both Langobardic and Roman law permitted the immediate slaughter of adulterer and adulteress caught *in flagrante delicto*, and erring princesses were brought to the scaffold without hesitation, for wherever arbitrary power existed it was always exercised with cruelty. Women married to Visconti of Milan, Gonzaghi of Mantua and Estensi of Ferrara met with this fate. Bernabò Visconti of Milan flourished in the middle of the fourteenth century and was the happy father of many children, both legitimate and illegitimate; one of his mistresses kept a court of her own, frequented by poets, musicians and singers, and interchanged presents with reigning princes. By another favourite mistress he had a daughter whom he named Bernarda. When she was little more than a child, he gave her hand, for political reasons, to Giovanni Suardi Cavaliere, the head of a distinguished Ghibelline family of Bergamo. The bride was a short, fat girl with reddish hair, a turned-up nose and a lively disposition. She made many pleasing visits to her father, who was extremely partial to her, perhaps because she bore a striking resemblance to her mother, both in looks and disposition. Now, it was whispered to Bernabò that Bernarda, when she visited Milan, was in the habit of admitting a lover to her bedchamber. Such an outrage on a political alliance could not be tolerated. The truth of the allegation was proved, a charge of robbery was trumped up

[1] *Belgrano*, loc. cit., 419, 426.

against the unfortunate *inammorato*, one Antoniolo Zotta, and he was whisked off to prison and thence taken to the gallows, seated on an ass, by way of added indignity. Bernarda was sent to a fortress and shut up with Andriola Visconti, the daughter of Matteo Visconti, Abbess of the Monasterio Maggiore, who has already been mentioned, and who was also under a charge of incontinence. By the virtuous despot's orders, both were put on a diet of bread and water ; he had the warrant of the statutes of 1351 for his act ; he meant both women to die of starvation and was much chagrined to find that his daughter held out so long. Piteous is the account of their sufferings from hunger and thirst ; they soaked bread in oil supplied for a lamp ; this was discovered and even that small relief of a feeble glimmer for the night-time was withdrawn. The two ladies were allowed to confess, and the confessor says that he was heart-stricken at their physical sufferings and mental anguish. Life ebbed, and at last they died and were buried secretly at night. Strange rumours spread abroad, and a prostitute of Bologna, for her own purposes, gave out that she was Bernarda. There was more buzzing than ever, and the prodigious fable reached the ears of the tyrant. He instituted a close investigation of all the facts, and it was from this legal inquiry, held in 1376, that the authentic truth came forth. One of the witnesses admitted that he was pander to Bernabò and paymaster to his mistresses. A friar, who gave his age as 92, said that he had obeyed the orders of his master and drenched Bernarda with cold water, "to put out the fire in her buttocks" (it was January when he did this, and there

was severe frost) ; she bore her tortures with fortitude, telling the friar he might do what he pleased, but she would die for Antoniolo, whereupon she was scourged and would have been treated to still worse things but for the entreaties of Regina della Scala, Bernabò's lawful wife. The court of inquiry was instructed by a monk-courtier that Bernabò had a high appreciation of virtue and was a man of sterling moral principles ![1] Truly rulers in the fourteenth century observed one law for themselves and another for their womankind.

Agnese, another daughter of Bernabò, a beautiful girl with a sweet expression and gentle eyes, also met with a pitiful end. Being legitimate she was married to a more important person that a mere Ghibelline noble of Bergamo: she was given, in 1381, to Francesco Gonzaga, the heir to Mantua. It was a time when every little state in Italy, being surrounded by many others, was beset by a thousand disputes, and every petty ruler had to strain his powers of treachery, chicane, and plot to the uttermost to maintain his position or extend his power, if he could not do so by brute force ; the passions were let loose and raged like devils unchained ; larger states were in the making by means of blood and fraud. Agnese's father had been treacherously murdered by his nephew, Gian Galeazzo Visconti, at a time when he pretended to be on a friendly visit to his uncle, and Gian Galeazzo, an expert in craft, a master of dissimulation and a monster in perfidy, now ruled at Milan and was rapidly extending his power ; he aimed at the unification of the greater part of Italy under his rule, and Francesco

[1] *P. Canetta*, Bernarda Visconti, Archiv. st. lomb., x. (1883), 5-53.

Gonzaga curried favour with him out of fear. Agnese naturally loathed the murderer of her father; when others called him the "Conte del Virtù" (the Count of all manly qualities) she corrected them; Gian Galeazzo was "Conte delle Sozzure" (the Count of all unspeakable filth). She hated her husband's craven toadyism and would not tolerate hearing a word in Gian's favour. She was the mother of one little girl; she burned to love and be loved; she had a gentle heart, but it was not free from that fierce thirst for bloody vengeance which was the fatal legacy of the Dark Ages—of days still blinder and more bloody than those she lived in. In 1390 her husband beat her to teach her how to keep a quieter tongue. Now there dwelt at the court of the Magnifico, as they called the Lord of Mantua, one Antonio di Scandiano, a young gentleman-in-waiting, much trusted by his master, so much so that Francesco would send him with messages to the chamber of Agnese at all hours of the day and night, and, indeed, he had free access there. Antonio was a handsome young courtier; a little arrogant, perhaps, after the manner of favourites, but only just enough so to captivate women; and a little amorous. He was at one time supposed to love a beautiful lady of the court, but of late he had shown Agnese more devotion than a vassal ought to yield his mistress, nor did she reprove him with all the dignity that should have marked a daughter of the Visconti and the Sovereign Lady of Mantua. What turmoil and doubt disturbed her breast who shall say? But being one day alone, as was usual, passing melancholy hours in her own private chamber (called that of Lancelot; for the story of his forbidden love adorned

the walls), Antonio chanced to come in. The lady asked him, with a smile, whether he truly loved the Lady of Mirandola so much as he would seem to do. Antonio sighed and answered, nay, in truth he loved another lady, and placed her above all others. Agnese was imprudent enough to pursue her inquiries, and Antonio, encouraged by the soft eyes of his mistress and fired by passion, made the fatal avowal, "You are she whom I love so truly and well". The lady declared that she did not believe one word of it, and Antonio set forth his love anew and affirmed that what he spoke was true as Holy Writ. Agnese did not wish to say, "I love you too"; for she had not admitted as much to herself; but she heard Antonio's avowal with delight in her heart; for what she had suffered only intensified her natural woman's wish to be truly loved and for herself alone. So, on many occasions, she asked the same question, and, always getting the same reply, one day she admitted, "I do not love you yet, but I see that never, however I may wish it, can I love as you do". But Antonio, though he heard her words, read the lady's eyes. It was not long before the hot love of youth prevailed over danger and the prejudices of rank and convention. There were carefully stolen interviews, and no one, not even the damsels attendant on the lady, had the least suspicion of an intrigue. But at last, grown bold by their fancied security, the lovers forgot that a court has eyes and ears. Agnese was observed to bathe her face with rose-water more frequently than of yore; Antonio praised his lady's great beauty with an earnestness and indiscretion that revealed a hidden fire.

Now, one day the cruel treatment she received from her husband sent Agnese, sobbing and choking, and cursing her fate, to Antonio; she fell on her knees and her lover, raising her, kept on entreating her to let him carry out a desire. "Consent to escape from this hell," said he, "say but one word, and I will slay him." But she steadfastly refused. By this time what was going on was clear to all the court, and one morning, one of Agnese's damsels, Beatrice di ser Gori by name, let her know that she had proof of the intrigue. The mistress was paralyzed with fear; she denied the fact, weeping bitterly. Days of fear and anguish followed, and then, calling Beatrice and her other lady-in-waiting, Agnese made them swear on a sacred relic that they would never reveal what they knew. But there was a woman about Agnese (appointed by Francesco of Mantua to be her companion in fact) whom she could not endure, whom she would not allow to sit with her, and whom, if she entered her chamber, she was wont to tell to go and mind babies, with other amenities; and this woman, in revenge, seized an opportunity of carrying the court-gossip to Francesco when Agnese was away hearing Mass. Gonzaga took the news quietly enough; he determined to dissemble his wrath, watch, and select his time for vengeance. But the cloud over the court blackened every day; every tongue wagged of scandal. Antonio got looks and hints quite sufficient; he perceived that he was in imminent jeopardy, and he resolved to flee. Agnese opposed this decision; she pointed out that flight would be equivalent to confession and implored her lover not to throw such a stain on her honour; and

this argument prevailed. But every day there were more and more signs that tempest was a-brewing, and Antonio again made up his mind to escape. He foolishly confided in another gentleman-in-waiting, telling him that next Sunday, when the courtiers would be out for a holiday, he meant to disguise himself and quit Mantua for ever. A page appears to have gathered something of the project and, boy like, was unable to keep his knowledge of such an exciting adventure to himself; he was indiscreet enough to let folk know that before next evening they would hear strange news. This reached the ears of Gonzaga; he sent for the page and cross-questioned him. That same evening the lover, his confidant, and the two maids of honour had to confront Obizzo de' Garsendini, Podestà of Mantua, and his coadjutor, Giovanni della Capra of Cremona, gentlemen charged by Gonzaga to find out "all that concerned his honour or the state or the commune of Mantua". The process was hotly pursued. At the end of rather over a week, many witnesses having been examined, Antonio and Agnese were questioned by the judges in the Palace itself (6 February, 1391), and a full confession was extracted, but the judges gave the culprits until the following evening to prepare their defence. But this not being forthcoming, judgment was pronounced. The headsman's assistant secretly conducted the unhappy wife to her garden, where she was beheaded, and, on the same spot, her lover perished, the rope being used for him, instead of the axe, as an additional indignity. The public regarded the tragedy with horror; the victims were deeply sympathized with, and it was generally

believed that Gonzaga had caused his wife to be slaughtered to gain the confidence and powerful support of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, by showing that despot that not his very spouse was allowed to calumniate him in Mantua ; it was also said that the prince wanted to marry another wife. Whatever crafty motives may have mingled themselves with passions of hatred and injured pride, the slow, cold vengeance of Gonzaga sets forth what manner of man he was.[1]

A generation later, we find another noble lady surrendering to a similar temptation and expiating her fault in the same way. Parisina Malatesta, who has been called the Phædra of the Renaissance and who supplied the genius of Byron with a congenial theme, was married when only fifteen to Niccolò, Marquis of Este, a man very much older than herself and the father of several children. Parisina was gay, devotedly fond of horses, and exultant when the Barbary steeds of her own stable won in races, a follower of falconry and the chase, but with a passion for music also, and loving to retire to her studietto where she could read in quiet those French romances so popular in the Middle Ages. Her favourite tale among them appears to have been the loves of Tristan and Iseult. But Parisina was none the less a notable housewife ; she attended closely to the expenses, looking after the amount paid for washing, even, and entering everything in household books ; yet she would spend much money on beautiful or rare objects, such as the expensive luxury of a clock, (whereof the pendulum weighed sixty pounds) and

[1] *Cibrario*, loc. cit., ii. 312-8.

beautiful dresses, and she was notably generous; we not only find her ordering the payment of just debts, such as one due to Giovanni da Rimini, who won three horse-races for her at Bologna and Modena, but supporting the petition of a poor man to whom the marquis had promised a complete suit of clothes (and who only received a pair of hose), and paying the costs of a journey to Padua incurred by a family driven away by the advent of plague. In 1424, when Parisina was but twenty years of age, Ugo, the eldest son of her husband, was at Ferrara. Ugo was a brave, athletic, handsome youth. So far, Parisina had acted the part of a mother to this young bastard; but perhaps Tristan and Iseult and the romances she read were not the wholesomest of literary fare; the court was luxurious and vicious; the marquis set a bad example to his retinue; he was elderly, but no woman was safe from his pursuit; yet, however often he might himself be *particeps criminis* he let it be pretty generally known that he deemed the female offender against the marriage-contract worthy of death. Ugo and Parisina were thrown much together; they both began to breathe the charming atmosphere of youthful love—this stepmother of twenty and her husband's handsome young bastard—and soon they were floating, helpless, along a swift current of passion towards inevitable catastrophe. We find from Parisina's account-book that she gave Ugo, whom his father kept short of money, twenty ducats, just as she was setting forth on a journey, though she had borrowed the money necessary to pay her travelling expenses.

Of course at least one maid of honour knew what

was going on: who knows the secret business of a house so well as the servants? It was indiscreet of Parisina, who was a fiery young person, like all the Malatesta, to beat a young woman who might have seen very much. Ugo was away, on a political mission to Venice, and perhaps his absence made her less even-tempered than usual. Anyhow, the young lady-in-waiting went out into the gallery and burst into tears. Now there came along this gallery a certain servant of the marquis, one Giacomo Rubino, who had cause to be very grateful to the marchioness for her kindness to his daughter, a girl whom indeed she had laden with gifts. But Giacomo may have had his suspicions; at any rate he "pumped" the weeping maid of honour, learned of love scenes she had witnessed, and, ignoring all gratitude due to his mistress, seized the opportunity to make his way with the duke. He poured out his tale, no doubt with the feigning of unwillingness overcome by sense of duty, and all manner and sentiment appropriate to such a distressing occasion. The marquis drilled a hole in the ceiling of the apartment where the lovers were said to keep tryst, and awaited events. Before very long Ugo and Parisina were surprised, and found themselves under escort on their way to the dungeons of that grim old castello at Ferrara. The news spread quickly through the city. Uguccione de' Contrari, Niccolò's oldest friend, and Alberto del Sole, his trusted minister, went to the marquis and vainly implored mercy. The man who had outraged other families became inflexible when his own domestic and despotic rights were attacked; he ordered Giacomo Rubino, the informer, to conduct Parisina to her death. Ugo suf-

fered first ; Parisina believed she would be cast into the *oubliette*, and her screams are said to have been heart-rending, but when she saw a bloody block before her and knew that Ugo had perished, she became calm at once, and took her fate with fortitude ; nay, she asked for death. Aldebrandini de' Rangoni of Modena, who had been in the confidence of the lovers and had aided them in their stolen meetings, received his merited punishment at the same time. The bodies were hurried off to S. Francesco and secretly committed to earth there.

The marquis grieved not for his wife but for his son. Late in the night he asked if Ugo were dead, and at the answer, " Yes," he fell into a convulsion of grief and despair, saying, " Let them strike off my head, too, since Ugo is gone ". He wept the night through, gnawing at the staff which indicated his state and office. But, five years later, we find Niccolò marrying another youthful bride, Ricciarda, daughter to the Marquis of Seluce, by whom he had two sons to console him. And as for Giacomo Rubino, who had borne the tale to his master, that worthy flourished in the world ; he was the marquis's chancellor for many years, his master overwhelmed him with gifts, nor was his son the recipient of inferior favours.[1]

That cold-blooded ferocity of the lords of the soil which we find in the Middle Ages, and the absolute despotism they exercised over their households persisted in the fourteenth century, as is shown by an incident that occurred in 1341. A legal inquiry

[1] *E. Rodocanachi*, in his work, Une Phèdre de la Renaissance, gives an excellent and accurate account of this tragedy and of the *vie intime* at the Court of Ferrara in Parisina's time.

followed a certain case of wife murder, and, in part, it is preserved. One night, it would appear, about midnight, a certain man who did some kind of service at the Castle of Manzano, but who dwelt outside the walls, was aroused by the warder and commanded to get up, for his lord, Taddeo, wanted him. When he arrived at the castle he was met by the Signor Pertoldo, the lord's brother, who told him it was for the least trifle in the world. Pertoldo took him to the cellars and gave him an axe, bidding him make a coffin. This he proceeded to do, Taddeo, his step-mother, the Signora Lucarda, a squire of Taddeo's, and several servants coming in and watching his work. When a rude coffin had been put together, he was directed to take it to the lord's bed-chamber, and, assisted by the house-steward, he carried it to that apartment. There he saw, lying on the floor, the dead body of the Signora Sofia, the wife of Taddeo, in a great pool of blood. He took up the head and others raised the body of the corpse and they put it in the coffin and then drove in the nails. He added, to this evidence, the remark that the murder of Sofia by Taddeo was quite common gossip, "whatever her reputation and condition of life might have been". The Signora Lucarda deposed that she was aroused by a servant who told her there was a great noise in the lord's room, so she got up and went thither and found the lady Sofia lying on the floor with a coverlet over her ; she saw her face, which was not bloody, and she did not see any blood on the flags. The wife of Pertoldo told precisely the same tale as the last witness. Pertoldo said that, when his wife was summoned by the female servant, he also arose and found his

brother, Taddeo, and the Signora Lucarda on the staircase in front of the door of the lord's room. Taddeo told him his wife was dead : what should be done ? Pertoldo replied that they should invite friends and bury her : he did not see the body. The house-steward, however, corroborated the tale of the witness who made the coffin ; he expressed regret at not having been able to lay the dead lady in it ; there was " as much blood about as if an ox had been slain there ". The evidence clearly pointed to wife-murder. Pertoldo and the ladies had evidently done their best to exonerate Taddeo.[1] This is by no means a unique case of uxoricide in this century. If the wife of a petty lord of the soil incurred his dislike, she was in peril of life ; the despot of a small state might have as many mistresses as he pleased, but a sharpened axe awaited his wife or daughter if she committed adultery.

On the other hand we find at least one regnant queen exercising to the full the privileges accorded to male rulers. Queen Giovanna II of Naples, who flourished in the first half of the fifteenth century, was a woman whose unbridled conduct is indisputable : all contemporary writers concur with Simonetta's statement that she " lived, without shame, with a miscellaneous company of paramours of various kinds, and these she was for ever changing ". Despots were placed over the communes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries because they held the scales of justice with an even hand and had military force at their disposal ; they gained, maintained and extended power by craft, subtlety, treachery and courage ; so long as the populace was moderately well

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., pp. 44-46.

governed and protected these qualities did duty for moral principle in the Middle Ages. When the state was subjugated and the populace rendered incapable of rebellion, we find families that have attained sudden power becoming recklessly cruel, and to the culture of the Court, pursued mainly for the glory of distinction, there is added that licence in conduct which may be expected from a privileged class.

No very marked moral distinction separated the wife from the concubine under Roman law and we have seen that no great formality was needed to constitute a marriage during our period. Under these conditions concubinage was regarded with a very lenient eye—a characteristic that remains with the Latin races. At a time when the barest expression of mutual consent was sufficient to tie a nuptial knot, concubinage was usual, bigamy was frequent, quiet divorce was not uncommon, illegitimacy was hardly recognized as a stain ; the efficiency of a man was the sole test of his worth ; the manner in which he came into the world rarely barred the way to the display of his powers. No one will, however, be likely to assert that, on the whole, the moral tone of Italy was inferior to that which prevailed elsewhere. And it must be remembered, with regard to sexual unions, that nothing is so variable as the code of orthodoxy which may be accepted at different places and at different times. That code is affected by economic conditions, the relative numbers of the sexes, tradition and religious sanction—bigamy, for example, though not condemned by Scripture, is a penal offence in Christian countries, while it is sanctioned by Mohammedan religion and law.

In 1274 we find a Genoese having a document drawn up wherein he promises his lady-love that he will not run after other women, but remain faithful to her until death. In 1279 a Sicilian girl promises a Genoese to cohabit with him "as a good woman," and, should she fail to remain one, he is at liberty to cut off her hand or foot or slit her nose or load her with chains. The notary appends his opinion that such treatment would not be legal. We find in the Neapolitan Archives, one Carolamo di Crescenzo, in 1434, endowing Margherita, formerly his concubine, "for good services received from her,"[1] and nothing is commoner than to come across legacies left to concubines, who are described in the antique Roman way as "dearest companions". But, in the fourteenth century, some communes passed inoperative statutes to put down concubinage, probably not in any spirit of excessive scruple, but to force citizens to strengthen the existing Government by allying themselves with families of the same political views. As a result of the prevailing concubinage, tender, generous humanity was exhibited towards illegitimate offspring. Even as early as the thirteenth century we find a separate building at Siena for the reception of 300 bastard children,[2] and by the fifteenth century nearly every city boasted some noble kindred institution. We even find the Government of Genoa looking after the welfare of the natural daughter of a friar whom he had abandoned and who was homeless and "her honour endangered"; a dower was offered

[1] Archiv. stor. per le prov. nap., ann. XXI, 113.

[2] *L. Zdekauer*, I primordi della casa dei gettateli, Boll. sen., V, 455.

to the citizen who would take her in marriage (1460).[1] The diaries of merchants are full of such entries as follows: "In the year 1272 Berta said that a little boy who had been born of her this same year was mine. I accepted and maintain him and now he is called Andrea. . . . In the year 1281 I had Giannotino of a servant-wench of Pichardia in Tolosa, and then she said there was another."[2] We find women declaring the parentage of their children before notaries, at the father's request, and promising not to place them in the power of another.[3] Good-hearted wives left legacies to their husbands' natural sons; very frequently, as we have noted on a previous page, they received them even when born after their own marriage, and brought them up as their own, and, no sooner does humanism appear than illegitimate children are buried with legitimate in the same family-vault. Since, by law, bastards had no rights, fathers provided for their natural children during life, and, in their wills, left them surplus property after the legitimate claims of nephews were satisfied. An abbot furnishes means for the natural daughters of his uncle, stating, by way of apology, that "they are of our blood, and their father deserved well of our house".[4] In 1537 a little daughter was born to Pietro Aretino, that prince of literary swashbucklers and gross-fed, carnal sinners; her mother was the lady who had longest fascinated his senses, or, it might be, reigned longest over a heart as pliant as it was liberal. Sebastiano del Piombo became godfather to the infant

[1] *Belgrano*, loc. cit., p. 473.

[2] Ricordi di *Guido dell' Antella*, Archiv. st. it., IV, i. 13.

[3] *Belgrano*, loc. cit., p. 409.

[4] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 230.

offspring of his friend, and Aretino watched the development of the little girl with intense affection, looking forward to the time when she should be married with great parental anxiety and pride. "I have to become her plaything," he writes; "we enact the pantaloon for our little ones; they trample on us, pull our beard, strike our face, tear our hair; that is how they sell us their kisses and hugs. But there is no pleasure like it; only, the dread of what harm may happen to them keeps us in constant alarm. Every tear they shed, every cry, their very breathing, pierces the soul."[1] Thus, while we observe a progressive decay of ecclesiastical rigour and an increasing indifference to conventional codes (that never received much more than lip-homage from the multitude), there is also a warmth of human kindliness heightening and spreading its glow abroad.

Although as much care was expended over matrimonial arrangements for natural as for legitimate children, it was usual to marry bastards to bastards; for, since by law they could not inherit, or stood to inherit only after the claims of relatives had been satisfied, they were less wealthy than legitimate children and could not pretend to the same alliances. But, so little was illegitimacy felt to be a stain, that in the struggles of princely houses the ablest member of them was put to the front, irrespective of the claims of legitimacy: for about a century bastards headed the proud house of Este and ruled the Marquisate of Ferrara.

It was a wholly humane provision of the Roman law to permit the legitimation of natural children.

[1] See *Carlo Bertrani*, Pietro Aretino, Sondrio, 1901.

This was effected by payment to the Curia or by a rescript of the Emperor. The Pope and Counts Palatine of the Empire continued a practice which they found profitable; on the receipt of certain fees they issued deeds of legitimation. But since advantage was taken of this facility mainly to alter succession or the disposition of property, natural daughters were rarely legitimated. Venice rigidly excluded bastards from inscription in the Golden Book of nobility, but at Genoa a law was passed to excuse the fathers of many sons from taxation, even if these were born out of wedlock.[1]

The loose way in which the nuptial knot could be tied is probably responsible, then, for the very great laxity with which sexual relations were almost universally regarded—an attitude to which the tie of wedlock, invariably proceeding from questions of convenience, as it did, and not from mutual attraction, certainly contributed. We find that Masuccio, writing in the middle of the fifteenth century, for the Duchess of Calabria and other cultivated gentlewomen, speaks favourably of certain gross experiments as to community in wives, and boldly prophesies that "posterity will regard the point of honour as a contemptible sentiment".[2] A striking instance of the loose manner in which such matters were regarded in this century is shown by the relations which the member of a noble family held with both a mother and her daughter. When he married the daughter the mother, his mistress, protested that she saw no reason why he who ate the brooding hen should not eat the

[1] *Staglieno*, loc. cit., p. 37. [2] Nov. 36.

pullets. Another member of the same noble family legitimated a son he had by a married lady, and yet another left a legacy to his illegitimate grandson.[1] Bianca Visconti, the wife of Francesco Sforza, is said to have presented her husband with a young girl of whom he was desperately enamoured : the old Condottiere was so struck with the Duchess' magnanimity that he refused the gift.[2] Isabella d' Este and other princesses shut their eyes and thereby retained their husbands' confidence. Galeazzo Maria Sforza presented a mistress with a deed of gift, witnessed by many noblemen, whereby he conveyed valuable landed property to her, "in recognition of her fidelity, modesty and beauty," but saddled it with the condition that she should not cohabit with her husband or any other man without special permission, given in writing, and the Duke threatened his wife, Bona of Savoy, with dire results should she think proper to interfere.[3] If wives were usually, they were not invariably, complacent concerning their husbands' amours. Francesca Bentivogli, on discovering that her husband, Galeotto Manfredi, was continuing his relations with a nun, lured him to her bed-chamber and slew him there.[4]

Insecurity of position led, in the Dark Ages, to deeds of violence and blackest treachery ; in the fourteenth century there was more craft than open violence exercised, for the people of Italy had become as a

[1] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 234.

[2] *G. Sabadino degli Arienti*, Poretane, nov. 36.

[3] *Cantù*, loc. cit., viii. 401.

[4] *A. Messeri*, Galeotto Manfredi, Faenza, 1904; *Stefano Infessura*, Diario Romano, f. 1221; *P. Bembi*, Hist. Ven., I, 10.

valuable milch-cow to the tyrants, to be squeezed for daily yield but by no means unnecessarily maltreated or slain ; perversion of intellect succeeded the perversion of brute-strength, so that a great admiration of mere cleverness was excited, and everything was condoned that was cleverly conceived or ably executed. Even to-day is not prudence rather than moral excellence necessary to success? This substitution of efficient mental power, however it might exercise itself in cunning artifice and subtle duplicity, was more consonant with general peace than the disturbing efficiency of the brutal energies by which a ruder time was subdued ; and those moral qualities that depend on social tranquillity had opportunity of progressive development, chiefly broken by the brutalities of foreign mercenaries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the foreign invaders at the end of the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth centuries. There was least restraint exercised in those small states that were the least secure and the most accustomed to the successes of unscrupulous ability. It is in them that we find monstrous lust triumphant ; it is there that we find the open incest of a Baglione and the brutal passion of a Malatesta ; there women remained almost as much exposed to violence as in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

In the sixteenth century the right of imposing law was attributed to the monarch, who was above all laws : on his pleasure hung the life of his subjects.[1] The attempts of small dependent potentates and others to preserve and, at the same time, to conceal the exercise of the privileges of their predecessors

[1] *Muntz*, Renaissance, p. 24.

led to dramatic results—results that shock and have stirred the imagination of histrionic writers. The history of the Duke di Brachiano and certain novelle, based on fact, were used by our forefathers in that tragedy of blood in which they delighted; great, forcible writers, such as Webster, have given the world the impression that the Renaissance was specially dedicated to the cult of crime, vengeance and cruelty. Punishment of offence by murder became all the more dramatic that it was done quietly, so as not to cause scandal. The sentiment of honour, which had become feeble in Italy (and, indeed, since chivalry did not flourish there, had never proved itself a very strong sentiment), was powerfully reinforced by the Spanish occupation and Spanish influences. A passion for the good opinion of one's equals, class-feeling, conscience and egoism combined to establish an ideal standard, to which many wife-murders must be attributed. The old Roman law which permitted immediate vengeance to be taken on those caught *in flagrante adulterio* had been repeated in some of the communal statutes. But in the sixteenth century we find cases where husbands, stung by a fine sense of honour, employ others as the agents of a retribution, slow, bloody and sure. There were those who thought the sense of stain too delicate, the punishment meted out too severe:[1] it did not pass unchallenged. "It is cruelly one-sided that we should claim the right to do whatever we please and will not permit women to do the same," wrote Bandello. "If they do what we disapprove of we have at them with chains and dagger and poison. How unnatural it is in men to imagine

[1] *Possevini*, Dialogo d' Onore, 1553.

that their own honour and that of their house hangs on a woman's desire!"[1]

Much of the brutality of an earlier time remained; but the woman of the Renaissance—nay the whole of the period in which she lived—has been painted in blackest colours. The contrast afforded between a full-blooded animal Pope, exposing his daughter to the temptations of a vicious Court and to spectacles of incredible indelicacy, and the pious principles that should have adorned the chief Pastor of Christendom; the contrast between a line of worldly Sovereigns at Rome, forgetful of all nobler duties than the preservation of a petty territory or the formal headship of the princes of the West and their claim to hold in their keeping a trust from Heaven; distinguished and refined delicacy of feeling united with coarse insensitiveness; the flowering of art and letters accompanied by the dark triumphs of crime invested with imagination: all these contradictory manifestations of the Renaissance have struck critics with horror, and shocked the moral sense more than do the unmitigated ferocities of a more really brutal age. But the truth is that the worst features of the Renaissance were an inheritance bequeathed by the Middle Ages. Closer investigation and, especially, comparative and historical methods, remove much prejudice and alter first and second and even third impressions, so that very severe censors are now obliged to admit that the comparative wickedness of the men and women of the Renaissance has been grossly exaggerated.[2] Rival courts encouraged

[1] G. I, nov. 26.

[2] *L. Pastor*, Hist. of the Popes f. close of Middle Ages, tr. *F. J. Antrobus*, 1891, sqq. v. 9.

scandalous tales of each other ; the malignancy of disappointed place-seekers gave rise to false or exaggerated libels ; the diffusion of letters and correspondence carried polluted cackle with it ; literary starvelings wrote dreadful fictions that gratified morbid taste then, as criminal details gratify morbid taste to-day, and posterity has accepted these inventions for truth ; exiles, sent away for their country's good did not deal too scrupulously with facts so far as they might tarnish the reputation of those who had expelled them, and any fiction, the evilest they could pick up, was welcome to tack on to the effigies of an enemy. It was not always that the accused had an opportunity such as befell Lorenzo Cibo when he wrote an indignant letter to the Emperor to clear the character of his friend, the Marchesana of Massa (the same lady who introduced the coach to the Florentines). Rumour accused her of having received him and a cardinal as her paramours at her country-house.[1]

Guarini hardly exaggerated when he declared the courtier of his time to be bound "by no tie of shame or gratitude,"[2] but Courts have never been very remarkable for austere virtue and have sometimes been charged with unedifying sexual licence and intrigue. It may be doubted how far the courtly morals of the period fell below the usual elegant standard. Mediaeval manners certainly still flourished in certain country districts. A writer tells us that in his time (sixteenth century) "in some parts of Italy it is the custom not to take a wife who has not led a free life

[1] *L. A. Ferrai*, Lorenzino de' Medici e la società cortigiana del cinquecento, Milano, 1891, p. 158.

[2] *G. B. Guarini*, Il pastor fido.

for a time; first she is a loose woman, then she becomes a wife and the mother of a family".[1] But that habit must have been very exceptional, for Pope Pius II, writing in the middle of the fifteenth century concerning an obscure Tyrolese parish to which he was once appointed pastor, notes the rude life of the place, and remarks that among other strange fashions "no man there ever takes a woman to wife that is a maid".[2] It is true that up to the sittings of the Council of Trent, even, respect for the outward forms of religion was declining, though, as we have seen, much sincere devotion still obtained, especially among women. Yet perhaps the belief that blots in an offensive life could be erased by a tardy or even by a death-bed repentance, was no such keen spur to virtue; and in the decay of traditional belief the individual mind and will were released to a larger field of activity and were, perhaps, more nobly employed than in servitude to a creed of terror. Society was in a state of solution, of transition, when there came a continued rush of invaders. The first breathings of a new social synthesis were throttled in the overthrow of Italian freedom, and all hope was finally lost in the obscurantism of the Catholic reaction against Protestants and liberal thinkers. If the moral code varies among different peoples, it is also perpetually, if insensibly changing among the same people; but, if we judge the men and women of the Renaissance by a really penetrating test and demand whether in the exercise

[1] *G. Battista*, Il convito overo il peso della moglie, Roma, 1554, p. 59.

[2] *Pii II*, Commentarii (wrongly ascribed to *Johannes Gobellinus*), lib. I.

of justice, in the outflow of tenderness to the weak and suffering, in the cardinal sense of "humanism," in the high virtue of self-fulfilment, or even in the crucial ordeal that calls for self-surrender, they stood above their forbears in the Middle Ages, there can hardly be hesitation in pronouncing that they did occupy much higher ground. They abandoned many conventions which, perhaps, have always been much more prated about than observed, but, free from these encumbrances, they mounted to where wider sweep of vision became possible. Of course freedom implies liberty to be base as well as to be noble.

Two powerful influences worked towards social reform in the sixteenth century. The sentiment of honour, though it gave rise to fantastic absurdities in opinion and conduct, finally extinguished vendetta, still strong in Italy, by substituting the duello. "Honour" followed up the work begun by humanism, in restoring that self-respect in the bosoms of men and women, which mediaeval religion had laboured to destroy. The Council of Trent, again, by emphasizing the sacramental character of marriage and tightening the matrimonial chain, acknowledged an ideal beloved of all noble spirits; though the kind of wedlock sanctified by the Council was very rarely a noble union of true mates, but, most commonly, a callous form of barter. We find a Pope urging Cosimo, the first Duke of Tuscany, to put away his mistress, the beautiful Camilla Martelli; this Cosimo found it impossible to do, so he adopted a compromise. Camilla, though of noble family, was his inferior in rank, and the "upstart" Medici, supported by Spanish protection and under Spanish influence, not being able to

raise her to the full dignity of consort, made her his morganatic wife. His son Francesco did precisely likewise, marrying his mistress, the famous Bianca Capello. Such a step would have been scorned by Can Grande or Bernabò Visconti.

Guazzo, writing in the sixteenth century, declares that the women of his time have improved in many ways and become more chaste. The persistence of barbarous methods of justice sometimes reveals the unsuspected, and perhaps some growing sense of modesty in woman is indicated by the threat exercised by a Roman official in 1565. He tried to induce female witnesses to speak the truth by promising, if they lied, to send them stripped through the streets, their names being declared and the populace invited to see them. More conclusive is the evidence of improved sentiment furnished by a play of 1590. We find the heroine calling on the hero, as a true lover, to respect her *onestà*, a word that now takes on a new meaning of personal dignity, chastity and self-respect.[1] A peasant woman committed suicide because she could not endure to survive the loss of her honour, and, though the bishop was unable to sanction interment in consecrated ground, he caused a monument to be erected to her memory.[2]

The coarseness of the Middle Ages had by no means disappeared : conversation was feculent in the highest and most cultivated society ; epistles were peppered with lewd jokes ; personal references of the grossest character were given and taken as acceptable

[1] *Guarini*, Il pastor fido, act iii. sc. 3.
[2] *Bandello*, G. I, n. 8.

harmless pleasantry.[1] Ladies of the highest breeding were frank and spoke to the point on each and every subject of human interest, including such as are not now discussed, though the dawn of the decency we require to-day is shown when Isabella d' Este finds a comedy a little too highly seasoned to her taste. But nothing was deemed unfit for general discussion in mixed company, and no joke was disqualified by its indelicacy. Yet a modern danseuse might have shocked a lady of the Renaissance: tolerance has been transferred from ear to eye, or perhaps our finer sense prefers the subtleties of innuendo in speech.

Infanticide was punishable by death, and we do not find the crime uncommon in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: women who practised "medicine," that is to say abortionists, were banished from the Patriarchate of Aquileia under pain of having their noses cut off.[2] Greek vice was common among men in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and in the fifteenth century we find the

[1] La Brogna, a lady-in-waiting of that illustrious dame, Isabella Gonzaga, wrote to her son Federigo, a lad of eleven, staying at Urbino, on 20 February, 1511, the child's mother being present, "Madonna Alda basa le mane a V. S.; la Nocencia et mi Brogna basemo et tochemo le coste et quale parte che più ne piace. Pregemo V. S. volia tochar el corpo a la S. Duchessa et aricomandarmi a sua S. et anchor al suo putino" allude alla gravidanza moltrata di Leonora. *Luzio e Renier*, loc. cit., p. 203; and on 26 May, 1516, Cardinal Bibbiena wrote what the manners of the time would pronounce to be a harmless pleasant gibe to Isabella, "Mia chara, chara, chara, te baso con tucta l'anima mia sin de qua et prego che ti ricordi di me come merita il grandissimo amore che ti porto," *ibid.*, 225. Nearly two centuries before Boccaccio remarked on the freedom of female conversation.

[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 281.

Church compelled, therefore, to praise the love of women: this was preached from the pulpit. The expensiveness of marriage increased this particular form of vice, and in the sixteenth century the Government of Lucca gave prostitutes great advantages to combat it.[1] Women seem to have been singularly free from Sapphic love. An anonymous writer levelled an accusation against Isotta Nogarola, the most illustrious woman-scholar of the Renaissance, but the charge was probably a piece of that scholarly indulgence in spiteful abuse from which hardly any eminent person escaped; jealousy or disappointed ambition was wont to discharge its venom in this disagreeable way. Molmenti says there is not a trace of any similar indictment to be found in the life of the lagoons.[2]

[1] Cantù, loc. cit., x. 286.

[2] *Molmenti*, Storia di Venez. etc., Bergamo, 1904, I, 301; *Segarizzi*, Nicolo Barbo e le accuse contro Isotta Nogarola, Giorn stor. del' lett., Torino, 1904.

CHAPTER XVI

THE COURTESAN

THAT saddest of all spectacles, the unhappy girl who offers herself to lewd uses for hire, though to be seen during the Dark Ages, was rare. The class only became numerous when serfdom and slavery began to disappear.[1] With the development of trade, an increasing number of men found themselves unable to marry early, or at all, or to take upon themselves the burden of ordinary concubinage, and a multitude of luckless women were doomed either to enter the cloister or to earn a living by prostitution. The Communal Governments made every effort to suppress the traffic. At Bologna, in 1250, a decree allowed the perpetrator of any injury to women having commerce with students to remain unpunished; in 1295 a pimp was taken to the Piazza, and there he lost an eye to justice. In Genoa the magistrates might declare a woman a common harlot if she were pronounced to be such by the public voice or worthy citizens testified to the fact; but if the accused were a married woman living with her husband they might not exercise this power. The statutes of Savigliano (1305) declare the harlotry of a woman to be defined by her having four or more lovers.[2] At first the

[1] *Canello*, Stor. del' lett., 1880, p. 22.

[2] *Cibrario*, loc. cit., ii. 32.

unfortunate was compelled to reside outside the city walls ; later, she was admitted to the poorer quarters of the city, but not near any church or convent ; she was only allowed to walk about on certain days and at specified hours, and bounds were set to her perambulations. Then, a special tax was levied on all common women, they were compelled to dwell in licensed houses, and to go about with a bell fixed on the head and wearing a special dress, so that "the knowledge of their shame might enter into eye and ear," but, with the softening of manners, the bell was abandoned. But the progressive unpopularity of marriage and the unnatural vices engendered thereby led to great laxity ; edicts became a dead letter, and in Lucca and Venice harlots were permitted to stand undressed at the window.[1] Sometimes the virtuous burghers would threaten them with branding and even with capital punishment, or impose the milder penalty of compelling them to hear sermons ; sometimes they would exile them in a body.[2] This they did at Udine in 1347, but nine years later it was found necessary to purge the city anew, and then it was deemed desirable to allow some to remain. We read of one ordered to be gone in a day under penalty of having the nose and upper lip cut off, and being taken in ribald procession through the city, seated on an ass :[3] the manners of districts remote from the great centres remained somewhat uncivil, and their rude law was wont to execute itself with homespun

[1] *Galliccioli*, Mem. Ven., Venez., 1795, lib. III, cap. ii.

[2] *Perrens*, Hist. de Florence jusqu'à la dom. des Médicis, III, 347.

[3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 222.

conviction. In 1440 the magistracy of Lucca gave permission to public women to go about freely, and later these were permitted to frequent the refreshment rooms of the baths, the proprietors of which were Germans, for the most part.[1] In 1534 they were accorded the rights of citizens in that town.[2] Infessura puts the number of prostitutes at Rome as 6880 in 1480; Albesi computed those at Venice to number 11,650, and, in 1577, the Venetian orator declared that nearly all the women of Naples were dishonest. Naples had never been a model city for virtue of any kind; Venice, as the great commercial centre to which the vessels from the Levant and the pack-mules of Germany brought their bales, was crowded with foreigners, with the usual result, and Rome was full of celibate priests and pilgrims from every part of the Christian world; so, as we might expect, these three cities were the central hives of vice. When the Catholic reaction set in, Pope after Pope tried to put down the evil. Pius V issued an order for the expulsion of all prostitutes and Jews from the City of the Holy Chair, but his subjects remonstrated: "What will become of the trade of the city?"—so ran their appeal; "Is not the Holy Pontiff thwarting Providence? If God had desired men to be kept from temptation, nothing had been easier to Him; but he desired man to exhibit virtue."[3] Pius was obliged to readmit the exiles of both orders. Sixtus V instituted a brisk persecution of harlots, without result. Clement VIII presided over a procession in 1593, when

[1] *S. Bongi*, Bandi Lucchesi, p. 387.

[2] *Cantù*, loc. cit. III, 407.

[3] *Rodocanachi*, Le Saint Siège et les juifs, p. 315.

the effigies of certain notorious women who had grown old in their trade were borne through Rome by men singing appropriate verses, and then these threw their burdens into the Tiber: His Holiness is said to have taken a pious satisfaction in beholding this spectacle.[1] But all was unavailing; the clergy could hardly hope to reform others while they themselves remained unreformed.

Quite suddenly, about the close of the fifteenth century, we are confronted by a special class of public women. Ordinarily they were remarkable for elegance and beauty, but it was not by these qualities that they achieved a unique position. These were not enough to give it them; they aspired to surpass all other women of every rank in mental cultivation and so to subdue the world: they soon had it at their feet.

The unnatural conditions of conventional marriage had favoured both harlotry and concubinage; these occupied recognized and important places in the social scheme. The step to the formation of an aristocratic class of public women, therefore, was not great. Prevailing enthusiasm for classical learning and the full and free development of all human faculty, whether intellectual or physical, gave intelligent Magdalens their opportunity. Even as early as the fourteenth century a *peccatrice* of Perugia, without any apparent sense of presumption, sends honourable salutations, not merely to a certain signore, but to his wedded lady;[2] the

[1] Le carte Strozziana del R. Arch. di Stato in Firenze, Inventario pubblicato a cura della R. Sopra intendenza degli Archivi toscani, S. I, 409.

[2] *W. Heywood*, Ensamples, etc., p. 122.

camp-women, when Perugia conquered Arezzo in 1335, ran for the palio, naked to the waist, attended the mass said for victory, and, clad in scarlet, triumphantly bore their prize through the conquered city; the mistresses of Bernabò and Gian Galeazzo kept gay courts of their own, whither musicians and poets flocked, and princes flattered these ladies.[1] Women and men were sold into matrimony, so it is not surprising that love as a trade was looked upon with tolerant eyes. But the suddenness with which a whole galaxy of women of high education, polished manners and loose virtue, are addressed by a thousand petrarchists in extravagant verse and by latinists in florid prose is very remarkable.

The courtesan took the Greek "companion" for her model; a new Diotima was ready to instruct the would-be Socrates of a renewed Hellas; Aspasia, reincarnate, should give counsel to a later Pericles. The courtesan, witty, widely instructed, accomplished, elegant, fascinated scholars, worldly potentates and princes of the Church alike, commanded their homage, and emptied their purses. The vile word *peccatrice* could no longer be given to a creature so adorable; the euphemism *cortigiana* replaced it. She was the embodied ideal of victorious femineity, the very type of grace and celestial beauty, all that woman could become for man, captivating his senses, stimulating his intellect and filling his imagination.[2] The courtesan became the inspiring model of the painter, the inspiring muse of the poet; the myriad

[1] *Grazziani*, Cronaca.

[2] *Veronica Franca*, Terze rime, capitolo vii.

versifiers of Italy hymned courtesans and Court-ladies with equal fervour.

Girls, training for the life, took lessons from the most distinguished masters and continued to receive instruction long after they had commenced their career; they could play musical instruments with taste; some of them sang sweetly; some loved art and were excellent critics (Veronica Franca gained the friendship and esteem of Tintoretto); many wrote prose essays in Latin (corrected by their masters), others wrote verses, full of affectations and conceits, but not without passages marked by delicate and sincere feeling and even expressing ingenuous and pure affection; Tullia d' Aragona wrote on Platonic love; Aretino tells us that one woman, by no means an exception in her class, "knew Petrarch and Boccaccio by heart, and innumerable lines of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, in the original, and a hundred other authors".[1] Camilla, the Pisan, wrote a book which a learned man corrected for her;[2] Veronica Franca sent Montaigne a volume of her own works. All were excellent dancers.[3] Dominichi says courtesans have no right to their name if they are not *cortesi*. That many loved the things of the mind for their own sake is evident; but the charge of a contemporary that culture was generally pursued more from the prospect of business advantage than anything else[4] is so true of professional

[1] *P. Aretino*, Ragionamento del Zoppino, p. 327.

[2] *L. A. Ferrai*, Lettere di Cortigiane del secolo xvi. Fir., 1884, pp. 31, 32.

[3] *Grazzini*, Le rime burlesche, Fir., 1887, p. 571.

[4] *P. Aretino*, La Talanta, Atto II, sc. 3; Ragionamenti, I, giornata, 3.

TULLIA D'ARAGONA AS HERODIAS' DAUGHTER

MORETTO

Brescia

students of all kinds that it was probably entirely justified. In 1539 several gentlemen signed a placard declaring Tullia d' Aragona to surpass all women, past, present and to come, "by her infinite qualities, and we offer to defend the thesis with arms";[1] but a letter of one statesman to another, who was Tullia's lover, shows that everybody was not taken off his feet by the fashionable craze: it contains reproaches that a man of forty-three years should make a fool of himself and share political secrets with a light woman.[2] A contemporary speaks of the great nobility of nature of some of these ladies (and that seems to have been the general verdict on them); "if they talk and laugh with men in a pleasant manner," he continues, "that is no argument that they are bad".[3] Tullia was sung by Bernardo (the father of Torquato Tasso), Ercole Bentivoglio, the Martelli, Bembo, Muzio, Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, Filippo Strozzi and other of the most famous and learned gentlemen of the time, all of whom were her courtiers.[4] We find a Portuguese courtesan dwelling in the same house as a consistorial advocate, beneficed priests, singers and women of her own class. When Lucia Trevisan died, October, 1514, solemn Masses and other offices, accompanied by music, were said for the repose of her soul during eight consecutive days.[5] Scholars wrote the epitaphs of deceased courtesans, and their obsequies were attended with much pomp and show

[1] *Biagi*, Un' etèra Romana, Fir., 1897, pp. 94-96. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Galeazzo Flavio Capella*, Della eccelenza et dignità delle donne, Roma, 1525.

[4] Rime della Signora *Tullia* e di diversi a lei.

[5] *Sanudo*, Diarii xix. 138.

of respect: when Imperia, the pride of Rome, died at the age of twenty-six (A.D. 1511), she was buried at S. Gregoria and a Latin inscription informed the world that there lay "Imperia, the Roman courtesan, who, worthy of such a name, gave a rare instance of beauty to men's eyes".[1] How far men were from associating the courtesan with a life of shame is shown by Bartolommeo Zacco, a bereaved father, imploring Veronica Franca to honour his dead daughter with a sonnet.[2]

In the evening the *salons* of the courtesans were crowded by a brilliant company. Subtle philosophical disputes were relieved by music, dancing and even by cards. To these reunions it was possible to gain admission by payment, whereas those presided over by great Court-ladies were limited to courtiers and acquaintances. Montaigne observed with surprise that the fee for conversation was as great as for "la négociation entière". Court-ladies thereby came into competition with this class of women. Castiglione advised ladies to emulate the courtesan in their knowledge of belles-lettres, quality of their epistolary correspondence, music, painting, dancing, manners and modesty. Young princes were admitted to their improving conversation: Federigo Gonzaga, aged 12, heir to the throne of Mantua, was taken to the house of a cardinal to see a Spanish comedy, and there he found himself in the company of Spanish courtesans; a few days later, another cardinal, who, indeed, was his uncle, invited him to a

[1] *Forcella*, Isc. di Roma, II, 104, n. 287; *T. Dandolo*, Secolo di Leone X, II, 252.

[2] *A. Graf*, Attraverso il cinquecento, pp. 327, 328.

supper where there were many other cardinals and the courtesan Albina.[1] Imperia, at the time when she was the mistress of the great banker Chigi, received all the distinguished visitors to Rome after the discharge of their religious duties, and was declared to be "unequalled in attainment, save by that noble lady Vittoria Colonna";[2] and, when she visited Ferrara, she divided the admiration of the Ferrarese with the Duchess herself, the illustrious Renée, Princess of the blood-royal of France. A poet declared that Rome owed her greatness to two deities: Mars had granted Empire and Venus Imperia. Artful mockery may lurk in this bon mot, however. But in general men had no suspicion of the genuineness of the homage they rendered to the courtesan, and this put great ladies on their mettle. The Princess, as a patroness of letters, had to tolerate and be agreeable to women of "dishonest" life if they distinguished themselves by authorship. At a time when the cult of the courtesan was far on the wane, Tullia d' Aragona, already "in the sere and yellow leaf," found herself hampered by the regulations as to professional dress, etc., which Duke Cosimo strictly enforced. She besought the Duchess Eleonora to appeal to her husband on her behalf, and the Duke, who, says Allini, "was always willing to please his wife," relieved Tullia from the obligation to wear a distinctive costume "in recognition of her rare skill in poetry and learning, in which she is remarkable among women".[3]

[1] *Luzio*, Fed. Gonzaga, Archiv. di R. Soc. Rom. di stor. pat., 1887, pp. 46, 47.

[2] *Luzio*, Rivista stor. mantovana, fasc. i.

[3] *Bongi*, Rivista Critica, ann. III, Il velo giallo.

Not merely do we find Veronica dedicating her book of verses to Guglielmo, Duke of Mantua, and discoursing, on equal terms, with all the *literati* of Venice, but corresponding with ladies of distinction.[1] Courtesans sat with "honest" ladies at banquets, and were given more credence in the courts of law than other folk. The history of intellectual development rarely veils more subtle irony than in confronting us with the spectacle of great ladies vying with meretricious persons in the brilliancy of their receptions. To the courtesan, in no small measure was due the development of the *salon;* by rivalry, women "honest" and "dishonest," were stimulated to put forth their full powers and strain all the intelligence of which they were capable; the art of conversation was improved; the competition of harlots with each other sharpened their own wits.

Often they possessed sharp tongues. A lady drew her skirts away from one in church: "Pray do not disturb yourself, madam," she was told, "my complaint only attacks those who welcome it". Another lady, passing along a street which had been built out of the tax levied on courtesans, had the wall taken of her by a member of the class, whom, therefore, she upbraided in straight and contemptuous terms: "I ask your pardon, madam," replied the offender, "I was wrong, for I recognize that you have a greater right in *this* street than I". A Roman damsel of the class, when asked who was the father of her child, traced modestly on the sand the cogent letters S. P. Q. R.[2]

[1] *V. Franca*, Lettere familiari a diversi, iii. xvi.

[2] *Rodocanachi*, Courtisanes et bouffons, p. 50.

They gave themselves great airs. Giraldi speaks of those who would keep their admirers cooling their heels quite two months at the doorway before they would vouchsafe a single word, or made them kneel when they spoke ; a new-comer was gratified if he was personally addressed in the most insignificant manner. A certain " Madrema non vole " poured contumely on the adorer who did not approach her with words of the current literary euphemistic code.[1] It was deemed a privilege to be allowed to salute a courtesan in public.

The class was most numerous at Rome by reason of the great number of pilgrims as well as priests. English, French, Flemish, German, Spanish and even Oriental women, of much worse reputation than their Italian sisters, settled there to welcome their countrymen who flocked thither to be hallowed by a glimpse of sacred relics ; Aretino says that the pilgrims, after examining antiquities, turned their attention to more modern beauties, and Calmo, who visited Rome after severe edicts against the courtesan had been carried out, exclaims, " Alas ! what shall I do now that they have all been driven out ? "[2] In days when beauty ranked as a virtue, some courtesans relied on it entirely, or on card-playing when the cloth was removed ; they were incapable of discussing Petrarch or Platonism, and this species spent most of the day in the bath or before the mirror. Many lived in the most luxurious palaces, fit to receive the foreign kings, the cardinals and the princes who frequented

[1] *P. Aretino*, Ragionamenti, Parte I, Giornata II, Cosmopoli, 1660, p. 106.

[2] *Rossi*, Lettere di *Calmo*, Torino, 1880, p. 278.

them ;[1] and sometimes these mansions were gifts from admirers ; Garzoni says the atmosphere of the rooms was laden with perfumes. Many of them became incredibly rich, but, as the Emperor Hadrian observed, "Venus reduces her worshippers to her own nudity," and most of them died miserably poor : Giulia, who was at one time incredibly wealthy, "had not the obolus required by Charon left ;"[2] even under the stern reign of Gregory XIII a Roman courtesan amassed 300,000 scudi and bought two palaces and a country-seat ; she paid 200 scudi to bravi to assassinate her husband (bravi often accompanied the lady of pleasure) because he demanded that she should live with him, and, the crime being discovered, she begged for an audience of Sixtus V ; this was granted, the culprit being taken to the Vatican in a closed litter to avoid the curiosity of the crowd, but Sixtus was not to be moved ; she had already been tortured, and he ordered her to be garotted. Isabella di Luna was whipped for transgressing a law, but the Bishop of Padua did not wish the lash to be plied with the utmost vigour, since she was both a woman and a courtesan.

Often a sincere affection existed between courtesans and their lovers.[3] Aretino wrote to Medea on the death of a lover, retracting his statement that the courtesan was incapable of sincere affection ; she had devoted her wealth to him in sickness, and she spent a fortune after his death on Masses for the repose of his soul.

[1] Il vanto della cortigiana, 1532.

[2] *Niccolò Franco*, Dialoghi piacevoli, Venezia, 1541, dial. IV.

[3] *Graf*, loc. cit., 258, 259 ; *P. Aretino*, Lettere, v. p. 147 ; vi. p. 176.

Many exhibited very excellent moral qualities. Veronica Franca, who confessed in 1564 to being the mother of six children of whom she attributed the paternity to three admirers, speaks of the unmeasured work she did for them, and of her grief and anxiety when they were sick;[1] she looked after her nephews and adopted the little son of her chambermaid. Before an accouchement she wrote, "I leave the little son or daughter that may be born of me to the care of M. Jac^mo de' Baballi as to a father—whether he be so or not, God knows". Some courtesans trained their daughters "in the seven liberal arts" to follow their own profession,[2] as did mothers not belonging to that class. Veronica, writing to a mother, who was set on educating her daughter for this purpose, entreated her to alter her mind, for "there is great difficulty in achieving beauty, and one is required to bear oneself with grace and discretion and to possess many qualifications . . . it is an unhappy thing and contrary to human feeling to subject body and mental power to such a multitude as makes one fear to think of, to give oneself a prey to everybody with the risk of being cheated, robbed, killed, and lose what one has been long in acquiring in a single day, besides other perils of injury and communicable sickness".[3] Courtesans had their standard of honour; Veronica complained that one of her friends had tried to besmirch hers.[4] The daughter of Imperia was so well instructed in all the principles of *onestà* that she

[1] *V. Franca*, loc. cit., lett. xxxix.
[2] *Guarini*, L'Idropica, act iii. sc. 10.
[3] *V. Franca*, loc. cit. lett. xxii.
[4] *Ibid.*, Terze rime, capitolo xxiii.

married, and when Cardinal Alfonso Petrucci entrapped her in a brothel, it is said she slew herself rather than yield, and fell dead at his feet.

The princes of the Church gave their countenance to the class. The Mantuan envoy at Rome wrote home, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, that, at an entertainment given by the Cardinal of S. Clemente, more Spanish courtesans than Italian guests were present,[1] and we find four cardinals, several bishops, a young prince and other gentlemen supping with the courtesan Albina (10 August, 1513). When Cardinal Caraffa, nephew of Paul IV, and Cardinal Vitello came to Perugia in 1557, Caraffa sent for all the courtesans in the city to come to the palace after supper, and, after he and Vitello had chosen their companions, the rest were handed over to the retinue.[2] Burchard notes (21 June, 1502) that a French cardinal and the papal secretary have just sailed for France, accompanied by two beautiful courtesans.

The courtesan applied herself to heavenly tasks hardly less eagerly than to mundane activities. She was almost as earnestly concerned in advancing her own individual fortunes in the celestial sphere as in pushing them in this world. It is the supreme mark of the egoist. The Muse of the Renaissance, as Gregorovius calls the Italian "companion," was intensely devout. The Mantuan ambassador writes of the multitudes of courtesans he found at S. Sebastiano at Rome on the festival day of the saint to whom

[1] *Luzio*, Archiv. di R. Soc. Rom., ix. 46, 47.

[2] *Fabretti*, La prostituzione in Perugia nei secoli xiv. e xv., Torino, 1885, p. 46.

the church was dedicated; they were listening to a Theatinine preacher, had come on horseback and mule-back, and their bearing was so restrained that he had difficulty in picking them out from the honest ladies present. In fact they were steady church-goers, and perhaps we may charitably and reasonably believe that many of them nourished a secret lamp in their bosom which lent some silent light and sweetness to their lives. Unhappy the wight who is without a solace that is for him and not for the world![1] But Lucrezia Portia went to Mass attended by ten pages and other servants; Tortera was escorted to church by one page and several domestics only; yet there were ten gentlemen also of her company. Often the courtesans entered the sacred edifice in male attire.[2] Their piety, however sincere, took a formal expression. Alessandra Fiorentina gives her lover (the most unbelieving man in the city) a rosary and a blessed palm to hang over his bed.[3] Beatrice of Ferrara writes (1516) to her lover, Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, who was lying ill of a wound, to console and amuse him; she regales him with indecency, remarks on Holy Week and Confession, and tells him how earnestly she offers up prayers for his recovery and how she has vowed to make a thanksgiving pilgrimage to Our Lady of Loreto if they are heard.[4] But in estimating the value and sincerity of this pious fervour, we must not forget the great stress laid on formal observances as the first step to the Blessed Life by the Church, and that, throughout

[1] See Stevenson's admirable essay, "The Lantern Bearers".

[2] *Rodocanachi*, Courtisanes et buffons, pp. 32, 33.

[3] *Ferrai*, Lett. di cortig. del sec. xvi. p. 80. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 81-85.

the Middle Ages, unchastity was regarded as almost a venial sin ; Dante placed such guilty lovers in the circle of the Inferno farthest from Satan and in the circle of the Purgatorio nearest to the earthly Paradise : complete chastity was the last mark of sanctity.

The courtesans had their favourite preachers and crowded close up to the pulpit. Beatrice writes to a friend, a cardinal : " I have gone to hear our preacher at S. Agostino. I say our preacher, because, whatever we are, we love to listen to him ; he is so eloquent. Gambara has been so moved by his words that she has taken the veil ; Todea is, so they say, on the point of doing so. I have made my confession to him and given him, for his trouble, two golden ducats, full weight, *which I much regret to part with at this juncture.*" All attended Mass, confessed and read books of prayer which, not unfrequently, had been given them by admirers. Many, when age had robbed their beauty of its freshness, repaired the damage with all the cunning contrivances of art, and redoubled their efforts to fascinate by forced liveliness and the tricks of stage effect : when the ravages of time admitted of no disguise they betook themselves to the repair of their damaged souls. Those who had money to leave directed that many Masses should be said for their repose ; Veronica Franca paid visits to her aunt, who was a nun and who received her :[1] she founded a reformatory for women of her class in 1580. (There was already a nunnery for convertites, but it was too strict, and this institution was also to be an asylum for the children of courtesans and for women separated from their husbands.)

[1] *V. Franca*, Lett. fam. vii. p. 12.

The eloquent preachers they followed converted many, but most returned to their trade. In 1508 a monk converted all that heard him ; on another occasion eighty-two came weeping to the pulpit, wanting to change their life and marry at once, and Roman ladies set themselves busily to rescue-work. One unhappy woman, who tried to escape from the Hospital of St. Mary Magdalen, was caught and decapitated in 1586 ; not many years before a cardinal had been surprised taking public girls home with him in his carriage, and the Bishop of Rimini was found with La Padovana in her home, but Papal discipline was now getting strict at Rome.

It is not uncommon to find the courtesan provided with a complacent husband. Sometimes she married to escape wearing the distinctive dress of her order, when the statutes enjoining this were rigorously enforced : Tullia d'Aragona married at the age of 37, so as to dwell where she liked and clothe herself like other noble and honest ladies, and the overseer of taxes at Siena gave her permission to do so (1544) ; seven months afterwards she was complained of, but the Captain of Justice would not listen to the accusation ; at the age of 40 she was courted by the Bishop of Glandeva and all the *literati* of Florence, and fell desperately in love with a young man of 24, writing him many passionate sonnets.[1]

The courtesan was forbidden to follow her profession on certain sacred days, and indeed the feasts and vigils of the year were usually observed by her with the nicest scrupulosity.[2] Her spendthrift ways often

[1] *Rodocanachi*, loc. cit., p. 61.

[2] *P. Aretino Ragionamenti*, parte ii. giorn i.

exhausted the purses of husbands and caused pecuniary loss to their wives and legitimate children.[1] The insatiable greed of successful harlots aroused moralists to protest ;[2] the Catholic reaction began to influence many people towards the middle of the sixteenth century, and Academies for polite discussion afforded a common meeting ground for cultured people of both sexes, so that the *salon* of the courtesan became less well attended. Sperone Speroni extolled the merits of the matron, pointing to the avarice, the miserable life and end of the harlot and to the happier lot of the chaste virgin and wife.[3] In Venice, where women were kept in almost Oriental seclusion, the harlot was not usually a very highly cultivated woman, though she was a very prominent feature in social life. Directories giving the names, addresses and fees of the class were published there, both in prose and verse, and so long as there was no attempt to pass herself off as a virgin, and she observed the regulations, the common woman was let alone. There can be no doubt that the lascivious public women of Venice had a corrupting influence on Venetian art ; their voluptuous faces and sensual forms are to be found in most of the great pictures of the period. But, at Florence, the grand-dukes confined prostitutes of all ranks to a quarter and made them wear a distinctive dress. Many clergy of Rome objected to the doorways of the churches being crowded by young nobles

[1] *Castiglione*, Cortigiano, lib. III.

[2] *Veniero*, Zaffetta, 1531 ; La puttana errante, Parigi, Lisieux, 1883.

[3] *S. Speroni*, Orazioni, Orazione contro le cortigiane, Venez., 1596.

who came to offer holy water to loose women, and a series of Popes tried to convert Rome into a puritan city! Beccadelli, had he lived in the reigns of Paul V, Pius V, and Sixtus V, would hardly have dared to declare that prostitutes had rendered more service to society than all the nuns of all the convents! They had been taxed, compelled to wear a special dress as a sign of infamy, compelled to leave a portion of their wealth to convents, but now a series of Pontiffs, bent on purifying the Sacred College, the priesthood and the entire Church, instituted a fierce persecution of a class fallen from its high estate, for it no longer boasted the attraction of very able or very highly instructed women. The Counter-Reformation put shackles on the thinker and persuaded the vicious to hypocrisy. But the courtesan had before this time again become like the ancient Roman meretrix; she was obliged to declare her occupation to the ediles; she was under police surveillance and compelled to wear a distinctive garb in other states than those belonging to the Papacy.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONSTRAINT AND PARTIAL AFFRANCHISEMENT OF A SEX; LEGAL STATUS, LIBERAL EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE.

THE laws relating to family life were, in the main, an amalgam of Roman and Barbaric laws; they were tinged, in the South, with feudalism; often they were vague, usually they were inefficient. Each little community was regulated by statutes more or less peculiar to itself. The turbulence of the Middle Ages rendered the position of women specially insecure; every means was taken to protect them, and, since conditions altered very slowly and violence and brute force were by no means unknown during the Renaissance, the statutes were but little altered. But any class specially protected by another class is necessarily subordinate, and subordinates, however generously treated, are naturally regarded as inferiors and are open to slight and scorn. The statutes of Macerata (A.D. 1553) declare women to be "a feeble sex: there is none that doth not know it"; the statutes of Parma (A.D. 1596) emphasise an ancient doctrine held in common by Roman and Langobard—"it is written," they say, "that man is the head of the woman and therefore she lives subject to his power and will".

The need for specially protective laws could be

illustrated by a thousand instances, almost all equally striking, though the worst are to be found in the earlier records. One or two must suffice. A little before Dante's time Alberico da Romano stripped the ladies of Treviso naked and turned them out of the city. They sought refuge at Venice, and the Cardinal Legate is said to have exhibited them, as they were, in the Piazza, to arouse the Venetian populace to take vengeance. Alberico da Romano was overthrown ; his six sons were hewn to pieces before his eyes and their flesh thrown in his face, his wife and daughters were stripped naked and driven through the Venetian camp amid the jeers and insults of the soldiery ; their breasts and noses were next hacked off and then they were burned alive ; finally, Alberico was torn to pieces with pincers amid the applause of the priests present.[1] A milder case is that of Beatrice da Camino, widow of a Count of Pescia, who was driven from her home after the death of her son, with only what she stood upright in : she had powerful relatives, but died before they could redress her wrongs.[2] In the fourteenth century Robert, lord of Socchieve, near Udine, stole several damsels of good birth, detained them in his castle and ravished them. The conduct towards women of two mediaeval brutes, named Tolmezzo, was so vile that the populace rose and slew them. A little later Gregorio Arcoloniani waited in ambush, surprised his mother-in-law, and murdered her by repeated stabs, because his father had left her a legacy.[3] During the Renais-

[1] *C. Cantarelli*, Cronaca di Fra Salimbene, I, 225 sqq.
[2] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 38. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

sance such cases became rare except in the smaller ill-governed States ; tales of poisoning were rife and, although most of these have been proved to be untrue by a careful examination of the archives, there can be little doubt that poison was employed now and then, and sometimes by women. But every case of sudden death was then attributed to poison, and if the entrails were found to be blackened this was regarded as indisputable proof.

In an age when education was defective the housekeeper was precluded, in great measure, from any knowledge of life ; she had not the advantage of that education by foreign travel which so often fell to her merchant-husband, and therefore was deemed so ignorant and stupid a person [1] that she could not be entrusted with the conduct of her own business-affairs. The tone of the novelists towards the burgher's wife is that of masculine contempt. The law treated her as a minor.

What rights the attainment of her majority brought her came to her two years earlier than to her brothers —the age was fixed at 12, raised in the fifteenth century to 14. She could transact no legal business without the assent of both her father and husband or of trustees. In some States, in order to check rash troublings of the law, she might not enter a law-suit in her own name or do violence to modesty by appearing personally at a trial: her depositions were taken at home or in a church. A widow could not marry again without the assent of her family: the interests of the family always stood first. A pious wife could not enter a third order without the sanction

[1] *Boccaccio*, G. I, nov. 10.

of her husband.[1] The dead hand of a father could condemn his girls to the cloister: the will of a Genoese, dated 30 March, 1206, obliges his daughters to take the veil, an adequate dower being left to the convent *ad hoc*, but two sons are only counselled to become monks "if they are agreeable". Another instrument of 1252 leaves it to trustees to decide whether a daughter should be given in marriage or consigned to a religious house.[2] In cases of intestacy there was much diversity among the statutes; invariably, however, the claims of kindred came before those of the wife; but it must be remembered that she had a right to her dower,[3] and, generally speaking, the law was careful to insist on adequate securities for the employment of the dower and its repayment; sometimes it secured to the wife the fruits of investment, but usually the husband was allowed the usufruct during his lifetime, he and his relations being liable to be called upon for a strict account of his dealings.

If women were debarred from certain rights they were endowed with certain privileges. The Florentines hated to punish women; they never rewarded those who yielded them to justice as they did those who were the informers on male evil-doers; it was often proposed in the councils to set female prisoners free, to destroy their prison even, and the city-fathers, shrewd traffickers for gain, every one of them, would

[1] *Wetzer und Welte*, Kirchenlexikon, X, 740.

[2] *Belgrano*, Vita privata, etc., 410, 411.

[3] See *Laboulaye*, Recherches sur la condition de la femme, Paris, 1843, and *Rodocanachi*, La femme italienne, etc., Appendice, 372-85.

none the less refuse to imprison female debtors.[1] Daughters were not held responsible for a father's debts. At Siena, in the last half of the thirteenth century, a special law-court was established for the hearing of suits brought by women against men,[2] and the constitution of 1262 put unfaithful husbands in the same position as unfaithful wives; but this did not last. An adulteress who deserted her husband forfeited her dower, but she regained it if he took her back; this law obtained throughout Italy, and in 1595 we find that men and women are placed on a footing of absolute equality as to alimony for succession.[3]

Wives were usually allowed to dispose of their dower by will; all marriage presents and all furniture brought by the bride to the husband's house were considered as a part of the dower, and a widow not only received her dower back but often enjoyed the usufruct of money left her by her husband; to such a bequest the condition was usually adjoined that it was only to be paid so long as she remained single and chaste.[4] In the fourteenth century we find women allowed to found religious houses,[5] and in quite early times we find the abbess holding jurisdiction, like other feudal ladies, over villages. Their representatives sat in the general assembly of citizens. Charities and public works often owed endowment or aid to generous ladies. The mother became one of

[1] *Perrens*, Hist. de Florence jusqu'a la domination, etc., III, 347.

[2] *Zdekauer*, La vita pubblica nel dugento, p. 63.

[3] *Marcotti*, loc. cit., p. 263. [4] *Ibid.*, pp. 87, 88.

[5] *G. Sainati*, Vite dei santi beati nella diocesa pisana: Chiara Gambacorti, Pisa, 1884.

her children's trustees, but ceased to be so if she remarried. The statutes were severe on any one who insulted or assaulted a woman.[1]

An ultra modern note was sounded by Masuccio who, in the middle of the fifteenth century, considers the woman who makes the first overtures in love worthy of praise for her strong spirit.[2] But the coarse abuse cast at women by this novelist, under the cover of excepting the ladies to whom he dedicates his tales, betrays an entire want of sex-cohesion among the women of that age.

If, legally, woman was placed in an inferior position to man, in facilities for high education the lady of the upper classes enjoyed equal advantages with him. In early times scholarship was the privilege of a very few gifted men, but it is said that, about 1330, the beautiful daughter of a jurisconsult replaced her father in the lecture-room at Bologna and taught behind a curtain, and that her sister was not less learned than she. That women of position possessed real cultivation of mind—even in the thirteenth century, we learn from Dante; but what the education of the ordinary burgher's wife was in 1396 is disclosed when we find the spouse of a substantial merchant learning to read.[3] All that was required of a trader's wife was enough attainment to enable her to watch her husband's affairs during his prolonged absences from home, and she therefore remained comparatively uneducated and unemancipated. On the other hand, the lady of the

[1] *Cecchi*, La donna e la famiglia it., Nuova Antologia, Roma, 1878, pp. 433, 647, 821.

[2] Il novellino, nov. 36.

[3] *Guasti*, Diario, etc., I, 159.

castle was called upon to defend her husband's interest and her own against the conspiracies of uncles and illegitimate sons when he was called forth to war or was absent on diplomatic business, and since this required the putting forth of all her intellectual endowment in fullest force, it came about that she was given no smaller opportunity of developing her powers than those who might, at any moment, become her antagonists. When, with an undue respect for antiquity, classical attainments were deemed to be the necessary foundation for all mental ability of the highest order, and the only gateway to respect and renown, girls as well as boys were put under the same mental discipline and educated together by the same masters.[1] No essential distinction between the sexes as to character, taste or ideas was recognized. Yet, even at the height of the Renaissance, there were women who passed their lives over embroidery and were left under guardianship and espionage.[2] No dame, not even the most highly instructed, ever neglected her domestic duties. Most women merely skimmed the cream from literature and life: in the most glorious period Bembo spoke of the advisability of a girl learning Latin "since it added to her charm," and Antonio Galeato advised Bona of Savoy to aim at mental cultivation "to please men, being born to command them". But the opening of opportunity to women aroused their interest and awakened dormant faculties, and we find them exhibiting an extraordinary and insatiable interest in all the phenomena of

[1] *Luzio e Renier*, Giorn. stor., xvi. 122-42; *C. de' Rosmini*, Vita e disciplina di Guarino, 1805-6.

[2] *Yriarte*, loc. cit., p. 329.

human life. They strove to give refinement to the home.[1] A proof of their emergence is that, in the fifteenth century, they began to inspire the painters.

Some women were stung as by a divine gadfly; more women chiefly desired fame—a passion imitative of the pagan writers of old, and supported by the sort of immortality they had achieved. This was a genuine passion, felt by all *literati* of the period, and neither the fiery denunciation of moralists nor the level voice of common sense could quell it. The damsels of the upper classes were instructed by the most famous men of their time, and some, throwing aside both the natural modesty and the acquired self-repression of their sex, set themselves to imitate and excel. They set a fashion, and in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries many women of very mediocre intelligence swelled the ranks of authorship and presented the world with works that bear all the marks of overstrained and over-educated powers.

The list of female scholars from Dorotea Bucca (1400-36), who was learned in classics, mathematics, and philosophy, down to Felicia Rasponi (1523-79), who wrote comments on the authors of antiquity and the Fathers of the Christian Church, is prodigiously long—remarkable, indeed, in this respect only, for to the literary output of these ladies no very high value can be attributed. All were precocious, many were the daughters of learned sires; proud fathers and teachers appear to have unduly forced their mental growth. Young girls spouted Latin orations before great dignitaries. Ippolita Sforza declaimed before Pope Pius II (1459), Battista Malatesta before the

[1] *Minghetti*, Le donne italiane nelle belle arti.

Emperor Sigismund (1433). But the glory of motherhood, potential as well as actual, carries limitations with it; the rapid forcing of the brain of a girl, who passes so much more rapidly into puberty than a boy does, and who suffers no fewer demands on vital resources than he during that critical period, cannot fail to be deleterious; incessant strain seems to have proved fatal to many, for it is recorded of several of the most promising young women that they died when very young. Jacopo da Bergamo, speaking of Trivolzia of Milan, at the close of the fifteenth century, says: "when her parents noticed their child's extraordinary endowments they dedicated her in her seventh year to the Muses". Irene, the infant prodigy of the noble house of Spilimbergo, placed by Il Carrer among the "seven gems of Venice, a girl equally remarkable for her attainments in letters, music, and painting, perished before she was twenty, and a painful list of similar premature deaths among female scholars might be supplied.

They were proud of their accomplishments. They rummaged antiquity for suitable pseudonyms; trumpets were blown with amazing vigour; compliments flew about like confetti; male scholars affected an extravagant admiration of their powers. Cassandra Fedele, born in 1465, at Venice, the daughter of an erudite father, took Greek philosophy and theology as serious studies and turned to the writing of poetry and to music for recreation; she secured the admiration of all scholars who visited Venice, corresponded with Pontano Pico and Poliziano, would have accepted the invitation of Isabella of Castile to adorn her Court but that the Republic refused to part with

her, and was overwhelmed with letters of adulation, in one of which she was informed by a scholar, who knew better, that she was "seated beside the Muses and equal to the most celebrated dames of antiquity".[1] Other female scholars received no less extravagant praise.

They were not without parts ; they blazed bravely enough in the high heavens of their age, but for the most part they lent but a passing glory to the constellations—they were ephemeral stars and now are but names. They were merely cultivated women who copied their masters, and the strong influence of the classical revival prevented their masters from giving the world much more than the copied style of Greek and Latin masterpieces. Isotta Nogarola, one of the most famous of them, robbed phrases right and left, especially from Guarino and Bevilacqua.[2] If their male preceptors lacked originality the female pupils showed no trace of that quality. The grace of Filelfo, the charm of Pontano, or the broad, bold imagination of Pico della Mirandola is not to be found in their writings ; every weakness, all the misplaced rhetoric of the scholars of the period, is faithfully reproduced, nay, even the coarse vituperation in which philosophers, disappointed of preferment at the Papal Court, voided their wrath. At a time when it had become fashionable to bespatter an opponent with the vilest abuse we find Laura da Creto (a Brescian humanist who died in 1469, under the age of 30) prepared to "tear out the tongue and lacerate the heart of any one who denies that women can excel in

[1] *A. Politianus*, Opera. Basil, 1553, lib. III, epp. iii., xvii.

[2] *Sabbadini*, I. Nogarola, Arch. st. it. IV, xviii. 43 sqq.

letters ".[1] They have the excuse that they were subject to the rivalry of both sexes, and it must have been very painful to have that unctuous adulation withdrawn by which and for which they chiefly lived. This fashion of flattery was paid to and welcomed by women of far smaller attainments in the sixteenth century. Dominichi speaks of Elena Barozzi Zantani as "like a Greek in beauty; like Roman Lucretia in virtue," and of Madonna Cecilia Cornaro as "excelling other ladies in beauty as the sun doth the stars ".[2] Giovamballista Dragoncino da Fano in his "Praise of noble Venetian ladies," 1547, addresses the wife of the Magnifico Antonio Zantani as "a new Helen, born on earth not indeed to fire another Troy, but to make sweet war on lovers, who have buried their souls alive in thee, whose beauty opens and closes that third heaven where few prayers are heard". A multitude of volumes were issued in various cities, and therein servile, and perhaps needy, men flattered all the leading ladies in the town with adroit and well-balanced but extravagant and vulgar panegyric.[3] These precious productions were the "society journals" of the age, and afforded the same kind of satisfaction.

Prigs and *précieuses ridicules* abounded. Morata Orsini, who enjoyed a proud reputation for wisdom

[1] *Pia Sartori Treves*, Una Umanista bresciana, Brescia, 1904.

[2] *Dominichi*, La nobiltà delle donne, 1549.

[3] *Camillo della Porta*, Laude de le belle donne perusine, 1526; *Jacopo Beldano*, Specchio delle bellissime domne napolitane, 1536; *G. Santafore*, Lodi delle donne Romane, 1551; *Troilo Pomeran da Cittadella*, Triomphe in laude delle gentildonne di Venezia, 1534; *Claudio Tolomei*, Laude delle donne bolognese, etc.

and learning in the fifteenth century, did her utmost to reach a very lofty standard indeed. At her wedding she turned her guests aside from the frivolities of the dance and indulged them with the graver and more improving occupation of reading instructive treatises aloud. At a *festa*, given in honour of the Emperor Frederick III, she reproved the ladies of Siena for appearing in fine dresses, telling them that they should strive after modesty, not ostentation; and, when asked what cavalier she thought made the handsomest appearance, replied that she had eyes for her husband only. When Irene di Spilimbergo was a young child a gentleman wanted to kiss her, and the precocious little damsel told him that only those should use such an endearment who were ignorant of its implication.[1]

All these cultivated women were ladies of good birth and position, and this, together with the fact that they were exceptions to their sex, probably accounts for the excessive adulation they received. They took themselves much too seriously, perhaps, but there can be no doubt that the highly educated lady exerted an immense influence over the arts, literature and social life. Dante, his group, and Boccaccio wrote in the vernacular to reach a circle of female readers; and, after the first strenuous enthusiasm for the ancients had subsided we again find authors writing for ladies in their own tongue. In the middle of the fifteenth century Pulci wrote his Morgante Maggiore at the instigation of the mother of Lorenzo Il Magnifico. Breaking away from the dominant classical influences of his age, Pulci attempted

[1] Cantù, loc. cit., viii. 399.

a work that should prove equally pleasing to ladies and men, and became the father of a school of courtly poets who delighted their patronesses with tales wherein marvel mingles with absurdity, high imagination with satire, delicate fancy with irony.

We have seen that the mistress of Bernabò held a Court of her own, and that the cultivated courtesan, at the end of the fifteenth century, opened her *salon* to men of wit and position. Whether the educated gentlewoman was stimulated by the social successes of the courtesan or the courtesan copied a *salon* already instituted by the Court lady the author is unable to determine, but it is very certain that a rivalry, which improved education and developed the powers of women, existed between the two classes. At the end of the fifteenth century Caterina Cornaro, ex-Queen of Cyprus, was the first lady in Italy and gave a fine tone to Italian society. For eighteen years she presided over a brilliant company, among whom the most splendid princes, foreign and Italian, the most famous scholars and the most brilliant wits were to be found. Caterina honoured letters, and her mansion was the scene of brilliant disputations ; but festivity and all manner of *allegrezze* relieved these graver pastimes.[1] Great ladies accepted dedications and encouraged musicians ; they commanded artists to paint their portraits and execute other works, and often sadly exasperated them by foolish directions and ill-judged requirements. But Albertinelli owed much to the wife of Piero de' Medici, Rafaello to the Duchess Giovanna of Urbino, Luini to Ippolita Bentivoglio,

[1] *P. Bembo*, Gli Asolani; *A. Centilli*, Caterino Cornaro e il suo regno.

and Elisabetta Gonzaga took a kindly interest in the orphan son of Andrea Mantegna.[1]

If the lady of the Renaissance cast off some of the feebleness she preserved the charm of her sex. Very scholarly women were exceptions, but if these added to their learning a not disagreeable presence, they were positively worshipped. By the middle of the sixteenth century Courts were becoming a little more frivolous than they had been in the time of Isabella of Mantua and Elisabetta of Urbino, and the courtesan was already somewhat discredited; so we find learned women congregated at those mutual admiration societies where literature, philosophy, and love were discussed. At first informal, these societies became organized into "academies" bearing grotesque titles; they abounded throughout Italy in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and all its prominent women were members and read orations and essays before an auditory of both sexes. One of the most distinguished of these female academicians was the lively Tarquinia Molza, whom Tasso immortalized. This lady had an excellent knowledge of Latin and Greek, translated part of Plato, was skilful in debate, was a logician, had some pretensions to astronomical knowledge, and charmed her circle of admirers by singing her own verses sweetly, accompanying herself meanwhile on either viol or lute. The Roman Senate, in recognition of her merit, presented to her, with great parade, a parchment setting forth that she and all children born of her were citizens of their "Republic".

The ladies of the fifteenth century, and still more

[1] *M. Minghetti*, Le donne ital. nelle belle arti al sec. xv. e xvi. p. 12.

those of the sixteenth, took great pains to give beauty and refinement to the home ; the more so that the streets were still far from safe. In fact this insecurity of life out of doors was probably a factor in the development of the *salon.* But the influence of women of education, delicacy, and taste on their sons was, perhaps, their chief contribution to progress. Many letters remain to show how capable and wise some women of high family were ; how they directed the energies of their children, instilled into them a sense of public duty, and gave good counsel to their husbands as to the conduct of public life.[1]

In the South of Italy jealous traditions hedged in the sex, and it remained unaffranchised. Attempts were made to break adamantine walls of prejudice, but these proved invincible. Isabella Morra, a Southern Italian, was given the same instruction as her brothers ; but, when her father left South Italy for the court of Francis I of France, these young men, who can have profited but little by their training, resolved to keep their sister in the situation which they conceived proper to women. They discovered that she was in correspondence with a distinguished Florentine poet and intercepted the letters. A powerful lady befriended Isabella and gave her counsel and aid ; this also was discovered, messengers were slain and all communication with the outer world was cut off. The Governor of Taranto then espoused her cause and set out to release her, but he and his suite were surprised and assassinated. Finally her brothers cut Isabella's throat. Her verses were pub-

[1] *P. Ferrato*, Alcune lettere di principesse di casa Gonzaga, Imola, 1879, p. xiii.

lished at Venice after the murder and are said to be mournful and full of resignation.[1]

Some small piping poetesses appeared in the fourteenth century, but their verses could not have been of much account, for they have not been preserved. By the sixteenth century there were hundreds of female rhymsters in Italy, most of them pitiful. Women rewarded the admirers from whom they received insincere amatory compliments by returning bald imitations, frigid conceits, and insipid affectations. Male and female poetasters and bookish essayists vied with each other in hackneyed commonplace or far-fetched and irrelevant rhapsody. Very rarely do these female writers manifest any sincerity; still rarer is any originality of thought or expression or even any peculiarly feminine sentiment discoverable. In their own time they enjoyed a fame which has not survived them. For the most part they did not even seize the beauty of life, of which their generation was peculiarly conscious, and, of course, they were as blind as others to its brutalities.

One woman wrote passionately, and her strains indubitably came straight from the heart. Gaspara Stampa (1523-44) was probably a courtesan, or, at least, a *demi-mondaine* after the manner of the famous Bianca Capello. She was a Paduan girl, pleasant and sweet of face, fair, tall and full-bosomed. She had a lover Collatino di Collato, whom she annoyed by jealous excess of devotion. Collatino was a soldier; he fought under the walls of Bologna, Siena, and Mirandola, and the lover was soon lost in the warrior.

[1] *A. de Gubernatis*, La poésie amoureuse de la Renaissance Italienne, 1907, pp. 248 sqq.

Before long, too, there was talk of his marriage. Gaspara turned to an ascetic monk for spiritual consolation ; her mood changes and she becomes

> Mesta e pentita da' suoi gravi errori
> E del suo vaneggiar tanto e sì lieve,
> E d' aver speso questo tempo breve
> Della vita fugace in vani amori.

The verses of "Anasilla" (for so she called herself, after the ancient name of the Piave, which flowed through the lands of Collatino) were collected by her sister Cassandra and published immediately after her death.

Veronica Gambara, another poetess of some importance, lost a husband whom she loved when she was but 28 ; henceforward she occupied herself with politics and in giving poetic expression to her affection, grief, and despair. She is imitative and her verses show signs of strain. Veronica had a friend, however, who struck an indisputably authentic note : Vittoria Colonna was perceived by Ariosto to be really endowed with divine fire. Vittoria replied to him that she had no sweet style ; only the gift of grief and tears. She and the lad who was to be her husband were brought up together and were playmates. Though the Marquis Pescara was unworthy of her noble love she was devoted to him and strove to check him in the tortuous courses to which his ambition prompted him. "I prefer," she wrote him, "to have a hero for my husband who should surpass all monarchs, though the greatest, by bravery in battle and unselfish generosity in times of peace, rather than a usurping king." On his death, Vittoria tried to convert her love to spiritual uses, but the

cry of the motherless widow breaks through the resolve. Her work is always noble and sincere, and this, her exalted position, and her entire womanliness, gave her the love as well as the admiration of all the best and most distinguished women of her time. The widow tells us how the sun gives no light, the stars have become pale, the trees leafless, the meadows have lost their flowers, the very winds of heaven are stale since her husband left her: yet he had been years away from her before she died, and she had been jealous of him, not without cause, and had not withheld her reproaches. And years after, at the height of her fame, she still writes that "the days and seasons come and go without it being any easier to me to bear my pain, or my grief lessening, or the heavy veil being lifted from my soul": indeed, at one time, she was with difficulty restrained by the Pope from entering a convent. In 1538 she met Michelangelo Buonarotti, whom she had known before. Michelangelo, now more than sixty years of age, was disheartened by the enslavement of his native city, by the jealousy of rivals, and by the death of relatives; but his heart grew young again in Vittoria's presence and she became to him what Beatrice was to Dante. He addressed a quantity of sonnets to her, mostly written in a mood of peaceful mysticism, but every now and again earthly passion struggles to disturb the tranquil blessedness which he declares she has brought him. Vittoria checked his ardour, though she loved to meet him in quiet places where they talked together of heavenly things. Like many of the best women of her time she was ardent for the reform of the Church, and her lack of humour is betrayed by her

requesting Pietro Aretino, a caustic wit and, perhaps, the most libidinous but not the least amusing writer of all time, to confine his facile pen to biographies of St. Catherine or the Virgin Mary, or, at all events, to entirely sacred and improving subjects. Aretino replied in a letter full of sincere respect and delightful banter, telling her that not his will but his necessity prevents his devotion to these more serious tasks. One must live, and he can assure her that entirely religious authorship would fail in that object; Christian princes of the most undisputed piety require something else whatever Aretino's own desire might be. "Excellent Madam!" he continues, "it is not everybody who has been granted heavenly grace like you; folk are aflame with less worthy desires. You, indeed, consume each hour of the live-long day in angelic ardours, but the kinds of office and sermon generally preferred for edification are music and amusing plays."[1]

The early novel took the form of a short, vigorous story of comic or tragic incident and the disasters and successes of intrigue—hardly the form of fiction likely to be very congenial to feminine genius, and, so far as the author knows, only one woman adventured into the domain wherein her sex has since achieved such renown: Pietro Aretino praises one Giulia Bigolina of Padua for her fertility in the writing of stories.[2]

The period is indeed destitute of a single authoress who is really remarkable for the least creative force. No woman can be named in the same breath with Pulci or Boiardo, Ariosto or Tasso, Machiavelli or Guicciardini, Michelangelo or Guarini, no woman exhibits real intellectual breadth and constructive genius. But

[1] *Pietro Aretino*, Lettere. [2] *Ibid.*

it was love for a noble woman that transformed Michelangelo, a man already distinguished for his colossal powers as painter, sculptor, architect and engineer, into a great, if unfinished poet. The woman-writer rarely soared above mediocrity except when she was least ambitious and most feminine ; then she unconsciously revealed her woman's heart, sad, tender and faithful.

More than once, women of epicene temper, like Catalina de Erauso, "the Spanish Military Nun," have been known to escape from the trammels of sex and, donning male attire, to enter on military service. Petrarch gives an animated description of a young woman whom he saw when he visited Naples in 1340 and again on his second journey thither in 1343. She "from the flower of her age chose to dwell in camps and adopt military habits and a military dress". Her appearance and strength were those of a hardy soldier, she was of prodigious strength, scarred all over, ever at war with her neighbours, a clever strategist and ready to undergo all the fatigues and hardships of a military life ; she slept in full armour in the open air, and not a soul dared attempt her honour.

Such a strange case of military obsession as the above was as remarkable a phenomenon in our period as it would have been in any other country or at any other epoch. But courage and presence of mind were constant qualities in Italian women. The men of Casentino found their wives fighting beside them when they attacked and dispersed the free-company of Corrado Lindo ;[1] the women of Signa put on armour and, with the aid of a few men only, defended that

[1] *M. Villani*, Cronaca, xiii.

castello against an army; in 1352 thirty women of the Mugello kept many armed men at bay; women took their part in the defence of Maniago against the Paduans, crying out to the foe while firing off their bombards, "Here are our oranges to pock-mark you"; at the siege of Pavia by Francis I of France, the women of the city helped to repair the breaches in the walls, and, by their pluck and energy, compelled the admiration of the enemy: such instances might be multiplied; over and over again we find women taking a heroic part in the defence of their homes. During the terrible siege of Siena, in 1554, the gentle ladies of the city were to the fore to vindicate its liberties: in three organized bands, distinguished by uniforms of white, red and violet taffeta, they laboured with incredible effort to strengthen the fortifications.[1] But, in the sixteenth century, it will be observed that these fair dames of the fair city made war with all the "pomp and circumstance" of fine smooth silk and its undulating lustre: far different was the simpler heroism of the fourteenth century. In 1310, during an alarming insurrection at Venice, a woman of the people threw a great stone mortar at the head of the chief rebel, knocking him and his standard down, so that panic seized his followers and they fled; when asked by the senate to name her reward she only requested leave to hoist the emblem of her city every feast-day and to remain in her house at the same rent.

In the Middle Ages, when the baron was away, it often taxed all his wife's energies and ability to defend his fee, and she often exhibited no less courage than

[1] *Blaize de Monluc*, Chronique.

sagacity. It is therefore with no great surprise that we read of Eleonora d' Arborea (1347-1404) reconquering Sardinia, sustaining a two years' war against the Aragonese, and distinguishing herself as a legislator. While in the city the burgher's interests were, to a large extent, protected by his guild during his absence, in the wily struggle for power among small Italian rulers the statesman's wife often found herself solitary, placed at the helm and called on to defend her whole family against disloyal relatives, intriguing citizens, and plotting neighbours, all bent on securing power to themselves. She did it well, maintaining a subtle, calculating temper through a stormy conflict of passions and suspicions, and, in the most perilous moment of siege, her dauntless courage never for a moment forsook her. Cia degli Ubaldini, in the fourteenth century, was entrusted by her husband, Francesco Ordelaffi, with the defence of Cesane. With her were a young son, a marriageable daughter, other younger girls and two little nephews. When all was hopeless, Cia's father, an experienced warrior, entreated her to yield to the besiegers on favourable terms. "Father," she is said to have replied, "when you gave me to my husband you told me that, above all, I was to obey him. So have I done until now, and I intend to do so to the end. It was he who put me in command of this place and told me never to give it up, nor will I in his absence unless I have his signal, whereof I hold the secret. For death and all else but my duty in obedience, I care but little."[1] This anecdote gives us the key to the position of the feudal lady, a position maintained by the aristocratic

[1] *M. Villani*, Cronaca, vii. 69.

wife throughout our period; she was the coadjutor of her husband, receiving delegated power from him and exercising it as his vicegerent during his absence.

In the Dark Ages women, famous and infamous, were to be found who manifested great capacity. Monarchs were the puppets of Brunichildis and Fredegonda; Theodora and Marozia were the real occupants of the Papal Throne. During the periods under our consideration the capacity of women for statecraft was duly recognised. A woman may possess other advantages than those of her personal appearance and the mollifying influences of her sex: she is usually very accomplished in the art of masking her feelings, and her subordinate position and repressed impulses, which have developed this power in her, have quickened her intuition also, and usually endowed her with tact. Hence she is often sagacious and wily in diplomacy. In the fourteenth century, Castruccio Castracani, aided by his wife, employed beautiful ladies of Lucca to persuade Azzo Visconti to come to his rescue; the lovely, assuredly discreet and conceivably chaste Lucrezia d' Alagno, beloved by Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Naples, with the consuming passion of an old man, was sent by that monarch to Calixtus III on a secret mission;[1] and in the sixteenth century it was no uncommon thing for Italian princes to send their ladies on missions, which they were likely to conduct on advantageous terms, to places where it would have been perilous for the husbands to go themselves, but where a woman would at least receive courtesy and might exercise fascination. In fact women proved

[1] *Pastor*, loc. cit., ii. 426.

that they possessed considerable political aptitude. To the discretion and tact of Lucrezia Tornabuoni the Medici owed much ; so did Francesco Sforza to his wife, Bianca Maria Visconti, for she not only defended Cremona against the Venetians and headed a naval attack on them, but was of the greatest aid in consolidating ancient possessions of her house into a new and powerful duchy. That highly endowed and highly educated princess, the fascinating Isabella d' Este, matched her wits successfully against those of skilled politicians ; she proved herself more than a match for the wily Cesare Borgia, and, virtuous herself, she knew how to use her frail maids of honour as decoys to ambassadors whom she was occupied in over-reaching.

The co-existence of the insecurity of the Middle Ages with the intellectual development and refinement peculiar to the later age produced a curious consequence. Jacopo da Bergamo, in his book on illustrious women, speaks of those who possess the intellect, force and courage of a man, but retain the grace of their own sex. The due observance of a retiring modesty was highly esteemed in private women, but princesses were, on occasion, called upon to display virile quality, and they were admired if they could do so.[1] And it must be remembered that the implications of the term modesty in an Italian woman were by no means then what the conventions of to-day cause it to bear : it meant reserved demure deportment, the natural niceness and grace of sex—femininity in a word. The *virago* was a woman with all the evidences of sex, physical and moral, but one

[1] *Boccalini*, Ragguagli di Parnasso, Venezia, 1618, II, xxxv.

who, educated in the same way as a man, could, on occasion, exhibit the qualities that are most distinctive of virility ; one who could, at need, employ all the resources of statecraft, exhibit the firmness requisite to a ruler, and equal any gallant soldier in her contempt of danger. To the virago a very thorough and respectful admiration was accorded. Such a character the famous Caterina Sforza exhibited in finished perfection ; her contemporaries called her the first lady in Italy ; as she said of herself, she was not born a Sforza for nothing.[1]

Throughout all the centuries of which we treat, the women of the *popolo basso* remained in wretched poverty ; the contrast between their misery and the cumulative wealth and luxury of the ladies of princes and merchants grows ever more hideous. When they got a little work to do they thanked God heartily ; often they had to beg for bread. Before the fifteenth century but few women were employed as indoor servants ; there were charwomen, and the washing of the household linen was sent to washerwomen ; it was never done indoors. The supply of water for the family was brought by female water-carriers. Many poor women competed with men as hawkers, having the poor for customers. The ordinary retail dealers who belonged to well-organized associations held their itinerant rivals, male and female, in bitter hatred ; to them they were the marauding Bedouins of trade ; they oppressed all those that had no trade-guild at their back to defend them ; hence we find male and female hawkers at Siena forming them-

[1] *Pasolini Dall' Onda*, Caterina Sforza, Roma, 1893.

Alinari

CATERINA SFORZA

FROM THE PAINTING BY MARCO PALMEZZANI

In the Pinacoteca Communale at Forlì

selves into a guild, which allied itself, for protection, to the more powerful association of innkeepers.[1] In early times there were women-barbers, who—so Barberino hints—would seem to have been disposed to flirt with their customers. Women kept taverns for high as well as low company, and some prostitutes kept brothels. Women earned their living as shoemakers as well as at dressmaking, millinery, embroidery, and plain stitching, and a few were professional cooks. Women-weavers formed guilds, and by the statutes of Lucca (1362) none were admitted to membership who could not count; this regulation was introduced so that their tally might agree with that of the merchant who employed them.[2] Not to spin might be visited by excommunication,[3] and bad workmanship was open to the same ecclesiastical penalty after the third warning.[4] Happy were they who enjoyed the protection of a guild. As time went on and guilds of the less skilled labourers were formed, women were grudgingly admitted to membership by the men, and their voice was unattended to. We find the Government supervising the wares sold by hawkers very strictly, and cases are recorded where women, selling diseased or rotten meat, were severely punished.[5] In Venice they may have plied the oar, for Bembo tells us that, when Beatrice d' Este came thither on a diplomatic visit, a boat-race of women was organized as a compliment to her.

[1] *Zdekauer*, Le donne nella lira del 1297, Boll. sen., x. 91-106.

[2] *Cantù*, loc. cit., vii. 34.

[3] Le prediche di Frate *Giordano da Rivalta*, 1730, p. 33.

[4] *Rodocanachi*, La dem. fior., p. 55.

[5] *E. Casanova*, Boll. sen., ann. viii. p. 5.

Few female painters appear before the sixteenth century. The painter had the wages and social position of a mere artisan prior to the High Renaissance, and probably his womankind were too busily occupied at housework and clothes-mending to assist him ; then, again, the guild was a jealous corporation ; women-painters only came to the front when guilds were decaying. There was a Caterina Vigri, however, whose pictures are preserved at S. Giovanni Bragna and the Accademia at Venice and at the Pinacoteca at Bologna ; she flourished in the first half of the fifteenth century. Like Marietta Robusti and Lavinia Fontana, the woman-artist was usually the daughter of an artist, and received her training in her father's studio. Canova said that the early death of Properzia Rossi was one of the greatest losses Italian art had suffered ; and Marietta Robusti, who died at 30, had a better reputation as a portrait-painter than her brother. The learned Irene di Spilimbergo was a promising pupil of Titian, but she died before she was 20. The lady-artists of the sixteenth century enjoyed an excessive reputation in their own day. They exhibited a certain measure of power, but it is evident that their contemporaries overpraised them ; to none can be granted more than a respectable, but quite inferior position in the Walhalla of Art. None the less the appearance of woman at the easel marks a further stage in the process of emancipation.

At the end of the fifteenth century we find the governess installed at the Palace. Highly educated ladies, trained by male scholars, were, to a certain extent, substituted for men in the training of girls, probably because they were better qualified to look after

young children in other ways than in merely instructing them. We find Violante de Pretis writing to her employer, the Marquis of Mantua, at the end of that century : " Your Highness will learn by this that the princesses are well, willing and obedient. I think very well of them ; they are anxious to learn and even to be industrious. When they desire amusement they ride their pony, one taking the saddle and the other being *en croupe ;* and I follow them in a little conveyance while a horseman rides beside them."[1] In the early part of the sixteenth century the novel profession was adorned by the famous Olympia Morata (1526-55), whom the Duchess Renée of Ferrara chose to be the companion of the little Princess Anna. Olympia was but 13, the princess five years younger. In two years' time we find her teaching the Princesses Lucrezia and Leonora, who became famous in story owing to the friendly protection of Tasso by the former and the entirely unfounded romance of his love-passages with the last-named lady. Olympia's father was the learned Pellegrino Morato, also an instructor of princes, and the daughter became a fine classical scholar. She instructed her pupils in Ovid, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Erasmus, Euclid, the spheres, and the map of the known world ; but they took lessons of male teachers also and received instruction in the accomplishments proper to their sex.[2]

The ritual of the Mass and other Catholic celebrations make a powerful dramatic appeal, and it was the

[1] *Luzio e Renier*, Mantova e Urbino, p. 5.

[2] *Rodocanachi*, Renée de France, pp. 184 sqq. ; *J. Bonnet*, Vie d' Olympia Morata, 1850.

custom, in the later Middle Ages, to enhance their effect by giving sacred representations in the churches as part of the religious service. At first all was in dumb-show, the explanatory verses being intoned; then the various parts, male and female, were really enacted, but solely by the clergy.[1] Soon, young men formed "companies of devotion," and those among them of suitable appearance and of falsetto voice undertook the female parts; often they gave representations in the public square. Nuns and their pupils also delighted to perform sacred pieces. At first everything was made as realistic as possible, and the inventories which are preserved of "properties," especially in country districts, remind one of the histrionic strategy of Mr. Vincent Crummles. But in the cities great artists came to be employed. A good deal of satire and comedy, not to say buffoonery, afforded relief to these sacred pieces, and the impetus given by these comic passages is responsible for the appearance of companies, chiefly composed of Jews, whose utterances were improvised, but who gave entertainments of greater novelty than those of Harlequin and Pantaloon and other characters of a venerable antiquity. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, we find the classical comedies of Rome revived and played at cultivated Courts. The *Menæchmos* of Plautus was given at Ferrara, in 1486, at a cost of more than 1000 ducats. Following this classical revival, plays by Italian scholars were written in the vernacular and produced, the expenses of representing them often being defrayed by general subscription among the

[1] *D'Ancona*, Origini del teatro in Italia, Fir., 1877, I, 41.

courtiers.[1] Incidental vocal music seems to have been given by the ladies of the Court; the female parts being still taken by boys or men capable of falsetto. But now and then we find courtiers, female as well as male, playing in these comedies,[2] and, when the Danza di Venere of Angioli Ingegneri was produced at Padua, the daughter of the Marchioness of Soragna sustained the part of Amarilli.[3] In France, even in the early part of the fifteenth century, women occasionally appeared on the boards, but there, as in Italy, it remained the rule for boys to enact female characters.

Stages, half-public, half-courtly, were constructed in the palaces of the sixteenth century; later, rude public theatres were built, and companies of travelling mimes assumed a growing importance. They were still chiefly composed of Hebrews. We read of a young Roman lady-comedian, who in August, 1562, was deemed attractive but not beautiful; "she has attracted many; she labours in the morris-dance like Hercules".[4] Towards the end of the century we come across many records of a surprising number of professional actresses who have achieved high reputations. A contemporary bears witness to the histrionic skill of a young lady named Flaminia, "who besides many endowments is judged of such ability in her profession that I do not believe even the ancients could have seen any one superior".[5] Flaminia was one of a Jewish company of actors who belonged to Mantua,

[1] *A. Solerti*, Ferrara e la corte estensi, cx. [2] *Ibid.*, cc. sqq.

[3] *A. Ingegneri*, Danza di Venere, Vicenza, 1584. See the dedication.

[4] *D'Ancona*, loc. cit., II, 448, note 4.

[5] *Ibid.*, II, 413.

and she appears to have been stage-manageress as well as leading lady. Like most of the educated women of her time she was the devotee of Eurato, and one of her erotic poems is pronounced to be passably good, though somewhat sensual.[1] We are also told of Vincenza Armini, who " has raised comedy to the level of *oratoria*, and, partly by her beauty, partly by her surpassing grace, has achieved a triumph in being the most excellent actress of our State " : the divine Vittoria, Celia, Maria Malleoni, called the fourth grace, Prudenzia of Verona, Silvia Roncagli and others also obtained popular applause.[2] Vincenza was equally successful in tragedy and comedy and was skilled in Latin, logic, rhetoric and music ; she sang well, was a sculptress, and, what was obligatory on the educated lady, she wrote verses. She really seems to have been an actress of the first order, and D'Ancona calls her the Sara Bernhardt of her time. She travelled through Italy and the neighbouring countries, and, wherever she went, the towns hailed her approach with the discharge of cannon. This lady was a native of Trieste and was not a Jewess : she received the sacrament. She and Flaminia acted together, were rivals and divided the town into parties ; Don Antonio Ceruto, who combined the very disparate pursuits of jurisprudence and poetry, writing in 1567, says, " I could attend to nothing but the comedy, nor did we hear anything among the people but some saying ' I am for Flaminia ' and others ' I am for Vincenza ' ; every house

[1] *D'Ancona*, loc. cit., II, 450.

[2] *Il Garzoni*, Piazza universale di tutte le professioni Venezia, 1599, p. 738.

is in hot dispute concerning them". The grand council of Mantua discussed whether the company, since it took money out of the city, should not be sent about its business, but the greater number of city-fathers thought the actors added too greatly to the public enjoyment and enticed young men away from gaming tables. The bishop, however, forbade monks to go to the play, "which was a grave loss, as a quarter of a hundred friars might be seen there at a time".[1] At Venice, plays were altogether stopped by the authorities.

Gentlemen and ladies of the courts, judges, procurators, doctors and all the intellectual aristocracy of the cities flocked to the theatres. A great favourite with this public, about 1585, was Vittoria Pussani: "Exalted above all praise was the divine Vittoria, who metamorphosed herself in the scene—a great magician of love, whose words light up the passions in a thousand hearts".[2] Equal to Vittoria was Isabella Andreini, born at Padua in 1562. For a time she played second lady to Vittoria in a company that travelled under the name of "The Jealous Ones". Isabella married Francesco Andreini, the manager of this company, and then became its leading lady. She was an admirable actress, maintained an unspotted reputation and achieved distinction as an accomplished letter-writer; she also dabbled in verse,[3] could sing and was an instrumentalist. Writing to Carlo Emanuele, Duke of Savoy, she tells him that she composed her *Mirtella* when she was so young as to be barely able

[1] *D'Ancona*, loc. cit., II, 450 sqq. [2] *Il Garzoni*, loc. cit.
[3] Rime d'*Isabella Andreini*, Milano, 1601.

to read. The Paduan Academy, called *Intento*, elected her to membership, and Henry IV of France treated her with all the respect due to a great lady. When Isabella died, in 1604, of a miscarriage, at the age of 42, all the writers in Italy (and there were very many) vied with each other in showering verses of lamentation and other literary tributes on her grave.[1] Her son achieved distinction as an author.

The theatre became very popular among ladies: Cunigiani, writing from Ferrara, 22 February, 1578, remarks on the great number of people who came to see the comedy, of whom most were ladies. But hot friends cooled just as quickly, the public was just as fickle in the sixteenth century as to-day; following an account of the extraordinary enthusiasm with which a certain company was received we find that "these comedians are beginning to experience a frost (*comminciano dare in zero*); scarcely anybody goes to see them". Rival companies were not less jealous of each other, rival actresses indulged no less in petty spite than to-day, and the first women who appeared on the stage found their virtue exposed to precisely the same perils. In the latter part of the sixteenth century a company was got together at the Mantuan court by Drusiano Martinelli and his wife, Angelica Alberghini. That juvenile swashbuckler, Vincenzo Gonzaga, the slayer of the "Admirable Crichton," fell madly in love with Angelica, and she even enslaved his father, the Duke, who was wont to treat the son with marked censure and evidences of

[1] *Agostino*, Le donne illustri d'Italia, Milano, 1864; *Belgrano*, Feste e giuochi dei Genovese.

his own superior rectitude. Duke Guglielmo made himself ridiculous, putting on suits of many colours and choosing the most splendid caps and feathers to fascinate Angelica.[1] In these encounters with tender passion the records reveal the actress who is invulnerable, the actress who transgresses, and she who can weigh profit against inclination : "Yesterday," we are told, "Lord Federico da Gazuolo came post haste to Mantua to steal away the actress Vincenza for his solace, but the little wretch, hesitating to abandon so many years of labour, pretended to disdain him. She went to him boldly enough, dressed as for riding away, then suddenly turned her back, daring him and cursing him, he being destitute of any weapon but the tongue for a retort."[2] Most actresses, however, were women of good repute, associating with princesses, treated with respect by sovereign rulers, and corresponding on equal terms with all the *literati* and famous men and women of the day.

We have glanced at the main stream of civilized life at a critical epoch, when it burst through stern and rigid confines ; and we have had glimpses of its rolling waters, casting now and again some wild, eager arm to snatch at unattainable heavens, bearing along broken, but not wholly unserviceable flotsam, salvage of the ruined past. Turbid and unclean was the current, yet not wanting in smiling moments and tranquil spaces of brooding light ; borne in rush and turmoil to greet the coming cycles ; casting some sediment of foulness on its way ; becoming less un-

[1] *A. Solerti*, Ferrara, etc., IC, note 4.

[2] *Antonio Ceruto*, quoted by *D'Ancona*, loc. cit., II, 453.

quiet as it descended to lower levels and spread itself in wider flood. We have left far behind that high region of nebulous æther where Womanhood sat beatified and enthroned by the Provençal poet, and now witness mere mundane triumphs, the laboured successes of the "mime," the woman who seeks the applause of a fickle multitude to win, thereby, her daily bread. In about three centuries the follies of an overstrained idealism are forgotten; petrarchism has become a lifeless formula; the eyes of men are fascinated by the painted actress, by her turgid eloquence, her exaggerated antics in the make-believe and vulgarities of the boards. Nevertheless, the appearance of women of decent life, earning a livelihood on the public stage and commanding respect there, the spectacle of women of distinction, whether they be Court-ladies or courtesans, presiding over assemblages of illustrious guests and discussing all matters of human interest as human themselves and on equal terms with men, the renown of women who combined virile virtues with feminine graces of mind and person, and the quiet entrance of women into the entire world of learning as a rightful province, are notable and fateful phenomena. The homage accorded to women in the sixteenth century falls far short of the rapturous ardours of the troubadour, very far below the pious worship of Dante. It was, perhaps, of no very exalted quality. But, in the main, respect was beginning to be rendered to women for what they were and had done or were capable of doing, and no longer to a mere inactive saintly image, suggestive of little but nerveless abstractions. Even Beatrice, except in her theological function, was little

more than a poet's ideal of what womanhood ought to be and might be in an ideal heaven. In the Italy of the sixteenth century women of the upper classes at least, had, to a certain extent and in certain directions, come by their own. However circumscribed the boundaries of liberty still remained, the sex developed unsuspected powers and exercised new activities.

But this is by no means all that we owe to these centuries. Amid much that seems to the modern mind so infatuate and ridiculous in mediaeval romanticism, it is the great service of clear-sighted Dante and mediaeval idealists to have bequeathed to posterity their record of a vision, new-born and glorious, which their soaring spirits attained. The sweetness, but also the austerity of truth and beauty, purity and grace, came to them embodied in serene and noble womanhood. Thereat their hearts kindled into the unselfish worship which is, of all human experiences, both the rarest and most real—love cleansed from the clinging imperfection of mere personal desire.

And, whatever we may deem of Christianity, or may think concerning the veiled and silent source of our heart's quest, or however we may choose to interpret mystic visitations, Catherine of Siena, because she clung to the Unseen with the adamantine credence of her sex, became, for all time, the beautiful model of woman's exalted passion for purity of heart and woman's active tenderness for all the stricken and sinful victims of a world wherein, alas,

Sunt lachrimæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.

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